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**A CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF APOLOGY STRATEGIES:  
CHINESE AND BRITISH**

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
AT THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

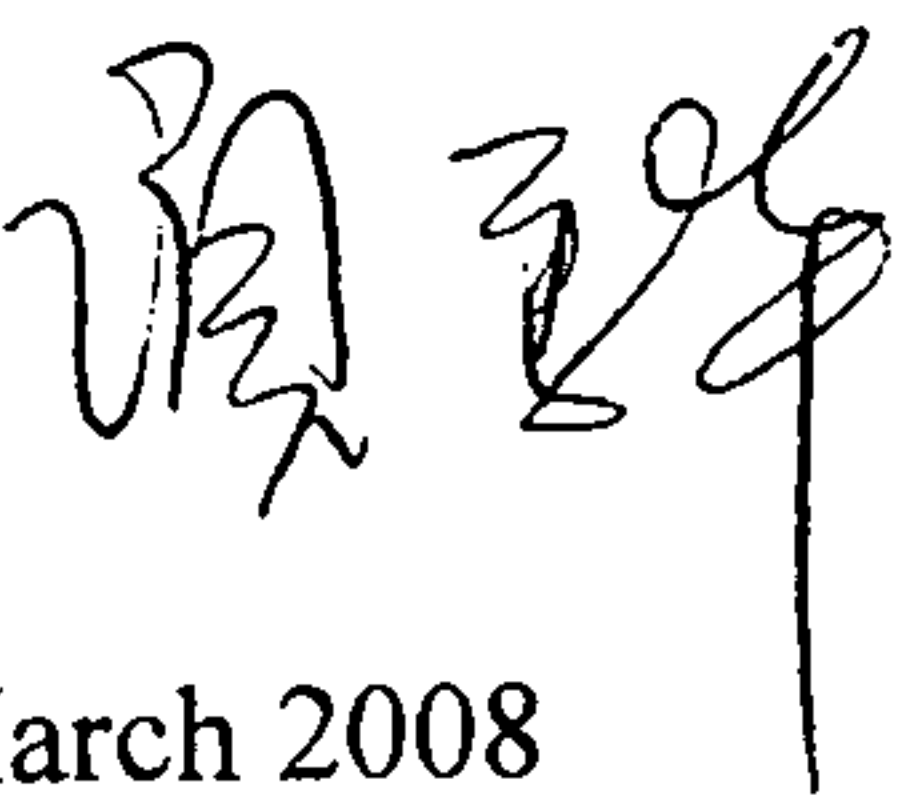
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September 2007

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## DECLARATION

I, Hua Xiang, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and all the quoted content has been referenced and acknowledged where appropriate.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

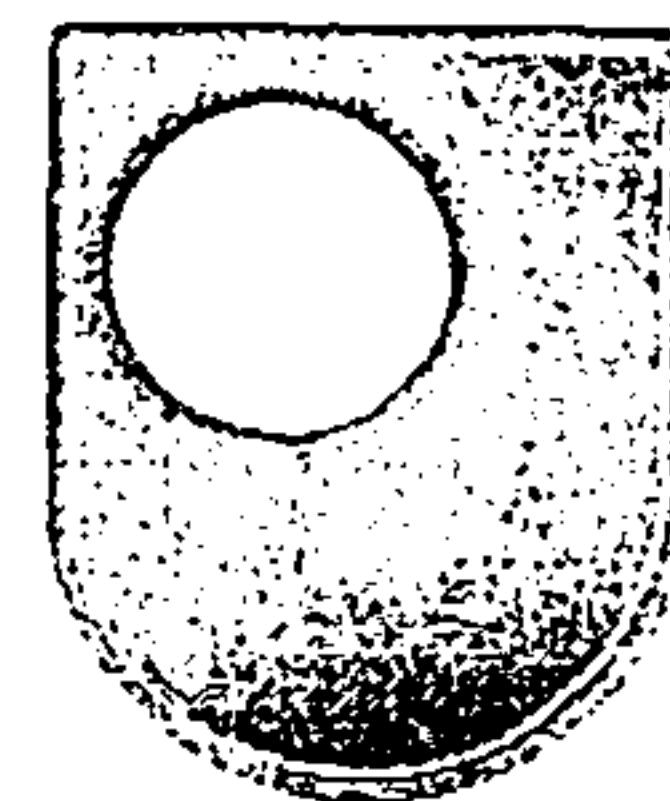
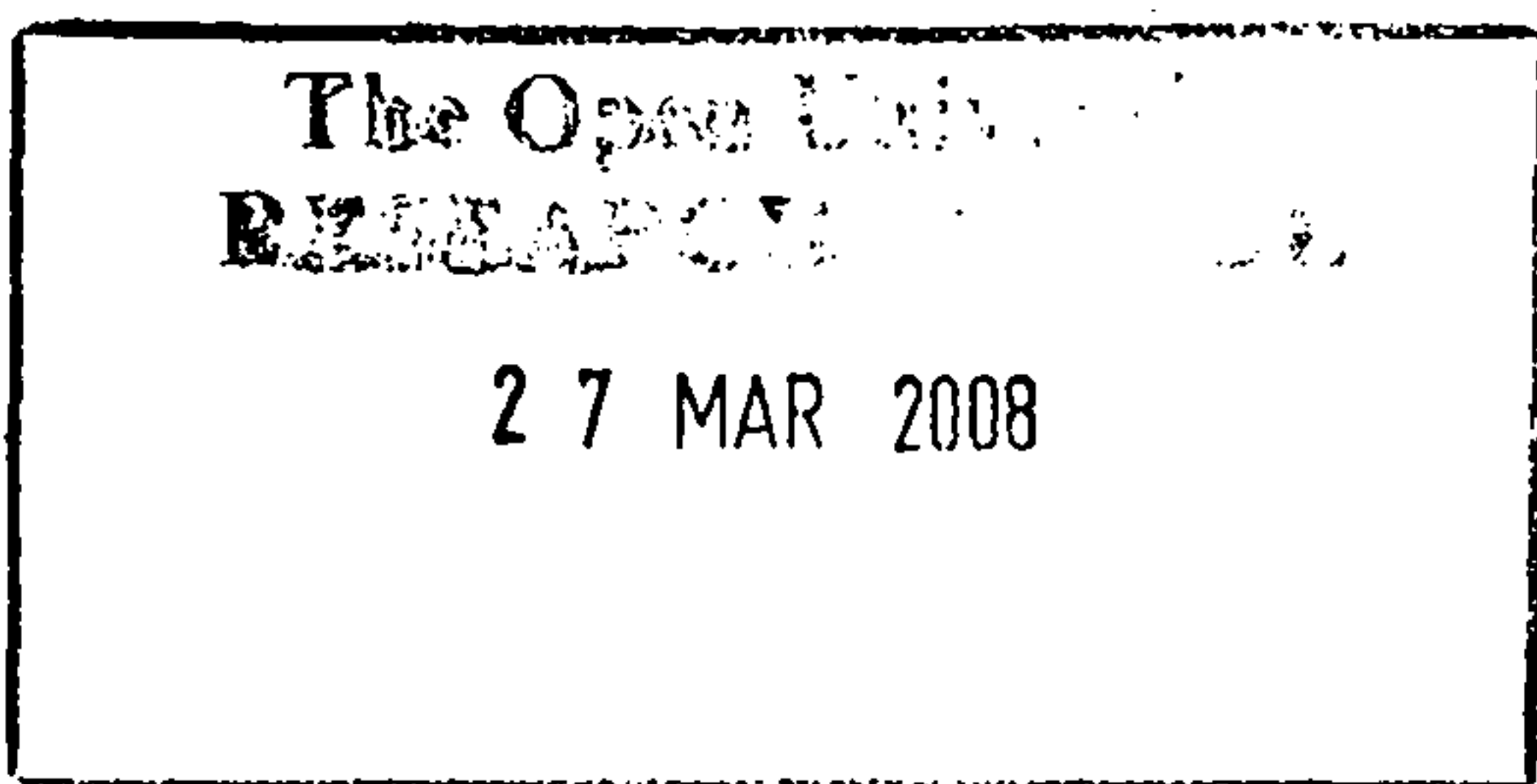
I would like to express my most grateful gratitude towards my supervisors Ms Barbara Mayor and Dr. Indra Sinka for their academic guidance and continuous support. The whole PhD process would not have been possible and so rewarding if not because of their invaluable input and warm encouragements. I also feel grateful towards the Open University Research School for offering me the scholarship for my PhD and also the Universities UK for the Overseas student research award which enabled me to conduct my field work in China.

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Last but not least, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandmother who passed away during my PhD study. I would like to thank her for her faith in me and her great love and care for me. It has always helped me throughout my PhD study. Similarly, I would like to thank my parents for supporting me to pursue my interests in research and for always be there for me. I hope this piece of work will make them feel proud of my achievements.





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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to explore cross-cultural differences in the ways that native British and Chinese people apologise. It attempts to further our understanding of deep socio-cultural values underpinning such differences. The study is based on three sets of data (an open role-play, an evaluative questionnaire and an interview) and provides a comparative analysis of apology production and evaluation by native speakers of British English and Mandarin Chinese, as well as by language learner groups of these two target languages.

Apologies are chosen because of their crucial importance in maintaining social relationships and face needs. The findings reveal different characteristics of Chinese and British apology, reflecting cross-cultural differences in social norms and value systems, as well as in perceiving face and social rights. The findings are interpreted within pragmatic and sociolinguistic theoretical frameworks, and are discussed in the following format: apology conceptualisation; apology realisation; individualism vs. collectivism; perception of face, politeness and rapport; perception of contextual variables. The performance of the two language learner groups is discussed in terms of pragmatic transfer, cross-cultural accommodation and potential causes of miscommunication.

This study examines theoretical and pedagogical implications of cross-cultural differences in apology strategies, and so is useful for various groups who participate in intercultural communications between China and Britain, such as businessmen, linguists, language teachers and students.



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# ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

Throughout this thesis, several abbreviations and symbols for the description of recurrent concepts and speech features.

## Abbreviations

BCSL	British Chinese second language learner
CCSARP	Cross-cultural Speech Act Realisation Project
CESL	Chinese English second language learner
DCT	Discourse completion test
F	Female
H	Hearer
IFID	Illocutionary force indicating device
L1	First language
M	Male
NB	Native British English speaker
NC	Native Mandarin Chinese speaker
RS	Role-play situation
S	Speaker
SP	Social Power
SD	Social Distance
SO	Severity of the Offence
T	Total

## Symbols and Transcription Conventions

**	name of the participant
...	pause
[ ]	over-lapping in speech



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# **Chapter 1      Introduction**

## **1.1    *Introduction***

This thesis presents results of a contrastive analysis of realization patterns and interpretation of apologies in British English and Mandarin Chinese, identifying the similarities and/or differences between the understanding of politeness by native speakers as well as advanced language learners of both languages in both Britain and Mainland China. By examining speech act performance and perception of apologies in British English and Mandarin Chinese, this study aims to compare the value and function of politeness in both countries from a cross-cultural and socio-pragmatics perspective.

## **1.2    *Rationale and Aims***

Many people who communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries have experienced communication breakdowns with interlocutors who are from different first language (L1) backgrounds or who speak different varieties of a language. Sociolinguists recognize that such intercultural miscommunication is partly due to the sociocultural identity that underlies each speaker's cultural group (Tajfel, H. & Turner, J. C., 1986). Studies by Sapir (1949), Whorf (1956) and others have contributed to our understanding of how culture and language are closely interwoven and how sociocultural values and beliefs frame the way we think and speak. The development of a second language, as Crystal (1997) points out, involves not only acquiring a linguistic tool, but also, and more importantly, developing a new world view embedded in the culture(s) of second language. This study is particularly valuable for language teachers and learners of English and Mandarin Chinese. In addition, with more and more global trading, and interaction between Britain and China, successful cross-cultural communication and awareness of cross-cultural differences has become more and more important in the business and tourism sectors.

Speech acts have been a central concept in pragmatic studies. In English, speech acts are commonly given more specific labels, such as apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, or request. Apologies have received attention by contrastive pragmaticists as one form of speech act. An apology is a speech act that is used to restore relationships between a speaker (S) and a hearer (H) after S has offended H intentionally or unintentionally. Further to this point, Olshtain (1989:235) states that “the act of apologizing requires an action or an utterance which is intended to ‘set things right’”. This speech act was chosen because it is an important social behaviour, fundamental in encoding cultural values. Also, apologies are relatively high frequency events which occur across, as well as, within cultures and exist at a relatively high level of consciousness for the groups involved. Furthermore, research has shown that failure to successfully perform apologies can potentially lead not only to miscommunication but also to the development of negative judgments, including inter- and intra-group stereotypes (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Thomas, 1983).

Ever since Olshtain and Cohen (1983) shed light on apologies from a pragmatic perspective, empirical studies have been conducted and demonstrated that speakers of different languages and language varieties follow different patterns when responding to accusations. For example, Barnlund & Yoshida, 1990, for Japanese and American English speakers; Bergman & Kasper, 1993, for native and non-native English speakers. However, studies on apology realization in Mandarin Chinese are still very limited. Given that Mandarin Chinese is the most spoken language in the world, and China’s active role in world economies is increasing, more research in this area of cross-cultural pragmatics is needed. In addition, few studies have explored the ways in which culture may affect people’s interpretation of apologizing behaviour. Most previous studies focused on production instead of perception of apology behaviour, whereas this study combines both these aspects, from the point of view of both native speakers and language learners. There



is a body of literature which gives us information on how apologies are performed in English, and some information on other languages: Arabic, Danish, German, Greek, Hebrew, Japanese, Polish, Russian, Swedish, Thai (Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Blum-Kulka et al, 1989; Holmes, 1990; Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Maeshiba et al., 1996; Olshtain 1989). However, most of these studies look at non-native speakers' approximations to English. It seems that limiting interlanguage pragmatics to the study of non-native speakers' use and acquisition of speech acts in a second language narrows the scope of pragmatics too restrictively (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). Therefore, there is a need among the international research community for empirical studies which provide information on how specific speech acts are performed and interpreted in different languages (Wolfson, 1989).

In summary, the current study aims to shed light on the verbal realization of apologies by both native speakers and learners of British English and Mandarin Chinese. It also aims to identify differences in production and perception of apology behaviour, exploring the underlying cultural values and assumptions that inform such apology behaviour. These aims can be summarised in the following research questions:

1. How do the following four groups of participants produce and evaluate apology strategies?
  - Native Mandarin Chinese speakers
  - Native British English speakers
  - Advanced Chinese ESL (English as a Second Language) learners in UK
  - Advanced British CSL (Mandarin Chinese as a Second Language) learners in China
2. How do cultural values and assumptions impact on participants' production and evaluation of apology strategies?

Retrospectively, some pedagogical implications are explored in terms of potential conflicts or miscommunication.

## **1.3 Theoretical Framework and Research Method**

### **1.3.1 Speech Act and Politeness Theory**

Speech act theory and politeness theory form the theoretical framework for this study. Here, apology behaviour is seen as *a speech event* with a set of speech acts rather than as individual utterances. It is argued that apology could be an on-going negotiation process, co-constructed by the apologizer and apologisee through several turns, in order to restore the social balance between the speakers. This study provides evidence for the actual functions of apology, and thus tests the validity of theoretical assumptions that all languages will manifest the same primary features. In order to understand how interaction styles form a part of a culture's ethos and determine the meanings attached to communication, both production as well as perception of apology behaviour is examined.

The current study reveals whether notions of *politeness* are culturally relativized, for example whether apparently similar choices of apology strategy carry culturally differentiated meaning for Chinese and British native speakers. Other norms appear significant, such as insider vs. outsider effect, sincerity, shame & guilt, and the influence of social rights on participants' choices of apology strategies. Differences in conceptualizing 'face' as well as in ways of engaging in 'face-work' indicate that Brown & Levinson's definition of 'face' (1978, 1987) does not seem to operate universally. Deep cultural values and assumptions influence the way Chinese and British produce and perceive politeness and rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2000). This was found to offer a broader interpretation tool for this study.



### 1.3.2 Cross-cultural and Inter-cultural Pragmatics

This study incorporates both cross-cultural and intercultural aspects within the broad field of pragmatics. Cross-cultural pragmatics, also known as contrastive pragmatics, refers to research that compares speech acts in two or more cultures. In this case, the speech acts are produced by native speakers in their native language. On the other hand, intercultural pragmatics refers to research that examines interaction between speakers from different cultural backgrounds. In this case, the speech acts under investigation would be produced by one native group and one non-native group using the target language. If the focus of the study is on how the non-native group produces speech acts, it is also known as interlanguage pragmatics.

### 1.3.3 Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is defined as the speaker's knowledge not only of the linguistic system but also of the sociocultural rules for its appropriate use (Hymes, 1974). Pragmatic competence, a crucial aspect of communicative competence, represents the ability to use language effectively to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context (Thomas, 1983). Two kinds of pragmatic failure are suggested by Thomas (1983): *sociopragmatic failure*, in which learners assess the relevant situational factors on the basis of their native sociopragmatic norms, and *pragmalinguistic transfer*, in which native procedures and linguistic means of speech act performance are transferred to interlanguage communication (Kasper, 1981; Olshtain, 1983; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983).

### 1.3.4 Methodology

Ideally, all the data for this study would have been based upon spontaneous apologies with fully naturalistic data collection. However, randomly occurring apologies raise problems in terms of controlling contextual variables as well as frequency of occurrence. It would be

physically impossible to collect sufficient data across four groups due to time and financial constraints. The majority of studies on the realization of speech acts have used elicitation methods such as discourse completion tests and non- interactive role plays. For this study, open role plays were devised, which were of an interactive nature and simulated ‘natural’ speech acts in their full discourse contexts. The instrument for data collection consisted of twelve situations eliciting apology which varied according to social distance, severity of offence and status (see Chapter 3). The contexts for the role play were intended to simulate natural, everyday situations which have an element of the unpredictable. The participants, native speakers of British English and Mandarin Chinese as well as advanced language learners of these two target languages, were university students studying a subject not related to language or linguistics. The role plays were video recorded. In order to explore participants’ evaluations and perceptions of apology, a six-point Likert scale evaluative questionnaire and interviews (both individual and focus group) were employed. Detailed discussion of the advantages and limitations of the research methods in this study is provided in Chapter 3.

## **1.4 Structure and Organization**

The study is presented in eight parts. This chapter is an overview of the background to the study and the organization of the thesis. Chapter 2 provides a detailed literature review of studies of apology strategies. The concept of culture is explored and the contextual variables of the studies are defined. The features of collectivist and individualist cultures and politeness theory are reviewed. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the study. Chapters 4 - 6 focus on presenting and summarizing the findings of the study based on data collection methods, namely role-plays, evaluation questionnaires and interviews. Following this, an interpretation and evaluation of the findings is provided in Chapter 7. In



Chapter 8, the strengths and weaknesses of the study are evaluated and some implications for pedagogy and the future directions of research are suggested.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to introduce and contextualise the concepts and methodologies applied in this study. It provides a thorough review of previous studies on apology behaviour as well as theoretical frameworks for cross-cultural and intercultural communication. Section 2.2 considers speech act theory and apology strategies. It examines the current scope of apology studies, including definitions, taxonomies, forms and functions of apologies. Section 2.3 defines contextual variables and explores the relationship between these and apology strategies in use; while Section 2.4 reviews politeness theory and rapport management. In Section 2.5, cultural dimensions of this study are addressed through a discussion of key concepts such as individualism and collectivism. This section also attempts to identify characteristics of Chinese communication styles.

### 2.2 Apologies and Apology strategies

#### 2.2.1 Speech Act Theory

Historically, speech act studies originate in the philosophy of language. Speech act theory challenged many previous linguistic theories which were based on simple assumptions that human languages are only a combination of 'sound and meaning' (Jacob, 1993:110). As Searle (1969:16) argues:

The unit of linguistic communication is not, as has generally been supposed, the symbol, word or sentence, or even the token (roughly: the occurrence) of the symbol, word or sentence, but rather the production or issuance of the symbol or word or sentence in the performance of the speech act.

In other words, speech act theory focuses on the *utterance meaning* rather than the *sentence meaning*. Speech acts are thus seen as the basic or minimal units of linguistic

communication. It is essential to bear in mind that the meaning and function of speech acts can only be interpreted by understanding the contexts in which they occur. For example, an utterance 'I have to work tonight.' could function as a complaint that expresses unwillingness to do a job or even calls for the hearer's sympathy; or it could also be regarded as a refusal if it was uttered after an invitation.

Originally, Austin (1962:150) classified speech acts into the following five categories:

1. 'verdictives' (giving a verdict);
2. 'expositives' (fitting utterances into the course of an argument or conversation);
3. 'exercitives' (exercising powers, rights or influence);
4. 'behabitives' (demonstrating attitudes and/or social behaviour);
5. 'commissives' (promising or otherwise undertaking)

There have been criticisms of this approach. The main arguments have been focused on the following two issues: 1) the categories are not mutually exclusive and thus often overlap; 2) the underlying assumption that every illocutionary act has a corresponding performative verb (Jacob, 1993; Leech, 1983; Searle, 1976, 1979).

Along with his criticisms of previous linguistic theory, Searle (1976:27) proposed a new speech act taxonomy:

1. 'representatives (or Assertives)' (The speaker's commitment to the truth of the expressed propositions, using the true/false criterion, e.g. believe, conclude, deduce, report)
2. 'directives' (the speaker's attempt to get the hearer to do something, e.g. ask, request, beg, command, order)
3. 'commissives' (the speaker's commitments or obligation to perform some future course of action as apposite to directives where the hearer has to do the action, e.g. swear, promise, reassure, guarantee)
4. 'expressives' (the speaker's attempt to express his/her psychological attitudes towards the hearer, e.g. apologise, thank, welcome, congratulate, wish)
5. 'declarations' (the speaker's verbal declaration that alters the state of affairs of an object or a situation, e.g. resign, fire, appoint, christen, declare)



However, none of the above classifications offers any further analysis into particular speech acts. A closely related question that has drawn much attention in early speech act theory is that of the conditions that must obtain before a speech act can count as such. Therefore, several conditions (called ‘felicity conditions’) are proposed with respect to the criteria for a speech act to happen. Thomas (1995:99) analyzed the felicity conditions of apology as follows:

1. propositional act: the speaker (S) expresses regret for a past act (A) of S;
2. preparatory condition interest: S believes that A was not in the hearer’s (H) best interest;
3. sincerity condition: S regrets A;
4. essential condition: counts as an apology for A.

She further points out that Searle’s formal approach to the categorization of speech acts may not capture satisfactorily the complexity of speech acts, because too many different criteria and different types of criteria are involved. She thus suggests categorizing speech acts in terms of ‘principles’, since speech acts can never be satisfactorily characterized in terms of ‘rules’ as defined by Searle (1995:107). The key distinctions between these two types of generalizations are represented in the following five respects:

1. Rules are all or nothing, principles are more or less.
2. Rules are exclusive, principles can co-occur.
3. Rules are constitutive, principles are regulative.
4. Rules are definite, principles are probabilistic.
5. Rules are conventional, principles are motivated. (Thomas, 1995:108)

While Austin and Searle claimed that speech acts operated according to universal pragmatic rules, others have observed that they tend to vary in terms of their conceptualization and verbalization across cultures and languages (Green, 1989; Wierzbicka, 1985). Ide (1998) examined “*sumimasen*”, a conventional expression of apology in Japanese that is also used to express gratitude and request. Through analyzing “*sumimasen*” in its ethnographic context in Japanese public discourse, seven functions were categorized and summarized. They are:

1. affirmation confirmation;
2. attention-getting;
3. quasi-thanks and apology;
4. request;
5. leave-taking;
6. sincere apology and
7. acknowledgement marker.

It is argued that these functional categories are not mutually exclusive, but overlapping in nature and it is through these various contextual functions that the socio-cultural meaning and function of “*suminasen*” emerges. The fact that a single expression signifies both regrets and thanks goes against the speech act theory of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), in which apologies and thanks supposedly fulfill separate felicity conditions. However, Ide (1998:528) claims that the discourse framework of a particular society in its socio-cultural specifics may alter the way in which we perceive speech acts from a more general, theoretical and universal perspective. It is believed that the findings of the current study could help shed some light on this issue and contribute to a better understanding of the existing speech act theory.

### **2.2.2 Defining Apology**

There are different perspectives for defining apologies. One is a condition-based approach advocated by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). Searle (1979:15) defines apologies as speech acts which express ‘the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content’. This definition emphasizes the conditions from which apologies can be generated. In summary, Holmes (1990:161) points out the following minimal felicity conditions:

- a. an act has occurred;
- b. A believes the act has offended B; and
- c. A takes some responsibility for the act



In these circumstances it is likely that what A says will be interpreted as an apology. Owen argues that this approach is insufficient because the felicity conditions are established by reference to the form of those utterances that are identified by the researcher as apologies (Owen, 1983:124). In other words, there is no systematic limitation on the conditions from which the relevant indirect speech acts can be generated.

Another approach is that based on semantic formula (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983). This approach attempts to build up a model of semantic formulae or strategies which regularly co-occur in apologetic responses based on elicited or natural data, being relevant for a felicitous performance of this speech act. Apologies are thus defined as a 'speech act set' (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983). However, it is virtually impossible to list all the semantic formulae which may express apologies (Holmes, 1990). This is particularly the case when apology is expressed implicitly as in the following examples:

*The bus was late.  
Oh, no! I completely forgot.  
I thought it was tomorrow.*

The above utterances can serve as apologies in certain contexts and cultures without using direct apology formulae such as "sorry" or "I apologise". On the other hand, the *forms* of apologising may correspond from culture to culture without indicating a correspondence of functions. As mentioned previously, "*sumimasen*" can be used for different functions in different contexts. Similarly, the apologetic formula 'sorry' in English may not always function as an apology. Moreover, intonation of utterances would be an important factor to consider in clarifying their functions here.

Blum-Kulka et al's (1989) model of apology strategies was developed within the CCSARP (Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns) project and drew on Cohen &

Olshtain's (1981) earlier model. The languages examined for apology within CCSARP were American English, Australian English, Canadian English, German, and Hebrew. Other languages examined based on the apology-set model included Danish (Trosborg, 1987); New Zealand English (Holmes, 1990); Japanese (Coulmas, 1981); American English; Hungarian and Polish (Suszczynska, 1999); Thai and British English (Intachakra, 2001); Uruguayan Spanish and British English (Marquez-Reiter, 2000); Akan (Obeng, 1999). However, to my knowledge, no studies have examined Chinese apology realization patterns and how Chinese English speakers or learners produce apology strategies. Furthermore, the above studies are largely descriptive rather than explanatory. Hence, the current study aims not only to contribute to the corpus of apology strategies but also to the understanding of cultural values and assumptions concerning the production and evaluation of apology strategies by native speakers of British English and Mandarin Chinese, as well as by English learners of Chinese and Chinese learners of English.

Although it is not possible to specify a complete speech act set for apology, it is still possible and essential for descriptive and comparative purposes to categorize the range of strategies which emerged from the Chinese and British data in this study. It is assumed that the existing CCSARP model will help reveal cross-cultural differences and thereby form the basis of understanding different cultural values and assumptions concerning interpersonal communicative styles in the West and East.

In this study, apologies are defined in a broad sense based on a 'function-centered' approach proposed by Holmes (1990:159):

An apology is a speech act addressed to B's face-needs and intended to remedy an offense for which A takes responsibility, and thus to restore equilibrium between A and B (where A is the apologiser, and B is the person offended).



This approach overcomes the limitation of the semantic formula based approach and offers grounds for cross-cultural comparison. This conceptualization is supported by Goffman's (1971) view of apologies as remedial interchanges, serving to re-establish social harmony after a real or virtual offence. According to Goffman's distinction, apologies could be classified into:

1. ritual apologies - those redressing virtual offenses, which are remedied by the sole offering of an apologetic formula, and
2. substantive compensation - those redressing actual damage inflicted on the addressee, sometimes including an offer of material compensation.

A comparable distinction between *casual apologies* and *genuine apologies* was proposed by Barnlund & Yoshioka (1990). *Casual apologies* usually are used when there is only minimal violation of a social norm. While, according to Barnlund & Yoshioka (1990:194), *genuine apologies* share certain critical features in contrast to *casual apologies*:

- There is recognition that another person has been harmed physically, socially, or psychologically
- There is awareness that one shares indirect or direct responsibility for such harm
- There is an obligation to acknowledge this awareness in some way.

Bergman & Kasper (1993:82) claim that both kinds of apology have been demonstrated to vary cross-culturally. Applying the above distinction between *genuine apologies* and *casual apologies* (Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990), the following paragraphs focus on disagreements among scholars as to the function and classification of *casual apologies*. Exploring the relationship between linguistic formulae and the function of apologies in English and Chinese respectively enables a better understanding of which cultural knowledge is important for the accurate interpretation of generalizations about these formulae. This understanding also constitutes a basis in this study for cross-cultural comparison in terms of functional equivalence (see Chapter 3 for more detailed discussion).



The basic functions of *genuine apologies* are to convey an admission of guilt to the offended person or to express a regret regarding the mistake or wrongdoing. In other words, the speaker's communicative goal is to obtain forgiveness from the hearer and to rebuild the interpersonal relationship. The following three examples<sup>1</sup> show situations in which the offences were physical, social and psychological respectively:

Example: In the street, a woman stepped on a man's foot.

A: Oh, I'm so sorry. Are you all right?

B: Yeah, I'm fine. That's ok.

Example: One middle-aged lecturer (F) was late for her meeting with other fellows.

A: I'm sorry. It's been a rush.

Others: (No response.)

Example: A young couple were having a fight.

A: You've just ruined everything!!!

B: (Silent)

A: I'm sorry. I didn't mean that. I just feel really bad about this.

B: (Gave A a hug).

One of the functions of a casual apology can be simply to open a conversation or get attention. In British English, "excuse me" is used in such situations, particularly when addressing strangers.

Example: Some people were waiting for the bus at the bus stop. A young woman asked another person waiting (F) for directions.

A: Excuse me, do you know whether bus 10 goes to the railway station?

B: Yes, it does.

Example: On the train, A (M) wanted to pass through the gate where B (M) was standing.

A: Excuse me.

B: Oh, I'm sorry. (moved aside)

A: Thanks.

In the second example above, "excuse me" was actually used *before* an invasion of the other person's physical space. That is to say, A was aware that an offence might be caused by trying making his/her way through other people. Whereas when B said "I'm sorry", it

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<sup>1</sup> All the examples provided in this section 2.5 were spontaneous speech acts collected through observation in England (Bristol and Milton Keynes) and China (Shanghai) respectively in 2003-4. Any explicit names have been changed for the sake of anonymity.

was *after* realizing that he had been getting in someone's way, and thus he felt the necessity to address it. On this issue, Borkin & Reinhart (1978) conclude that, for substantive offences, native speakers of British English employ "I'm sorry" and not "excuse me"; however, "excuse me" is more appropriate than "I'm sorry" to remedy a past or immediately forthcoming breach of etiquette, or other light infraction of a social rule (1978:61). When defining these two phrases, they argue that "*I'm sorry* is not necessarily a remedy, as Goffman defines the term. *Excuse me*, on the other hand, is basically a formula used as a remedy." (1978:60).

In Mandarin Chinese, there are also several formulaic remedies to express regret. Among them, the following three are the most frequently used: "*dui bu qi*", "*bu hao yi si*" and "*bao qian*". In terms of formality, "*bao qian*" (<sup>2</sup>be sorry; feel apologetic; regret) is the most formal form to address the offence and therefore most often used in public or on formal occasions or where the offence is severe. The next formal one is "*dui bu qi*" (I'm sorry; sorry; excuse me; pardon me) and then finally "*bu hao yi si*" (feel embarrassed).

There is a lot of overlap in terms of the use of "*dui bu qi*" and "*bu hao yi si*" and they both can be used in a wide range of contexts. However, apart from the fact that "*dui bu qi*" may be more suitable for remedying more severe offences, "*bu hao yi si*" functions more similarly to "excuse me" in British English. In addition, it can express both apology and gratitude, thus functioning similarly to the Japanese expression "*suminasen*" found in Ide's (1998) study mentioned in Section 2.2.

Another ritual function of apology formulae in British English can be to convey the awareness that others face unfortunate circumstances. Intachakra (2001) further

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<sup>2</sup> Translations taken from "A Chinese-English Dictionary" by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 1995



characterises this type of apology formula as “essentially ritualistic”, it being employed to show sympathy to people, following Leech’s (1987) sympathy maxim.

Example A (F) told her friend B (F) that she had just lost her job.

A: I’m completely and utterly sacked!!

B: Oh, I’m so sorry, Jane.

However, Chinese apology formulae do not seem to have this function. Typically, in this kind of situation, a Chinese person may try to comfort or encourage his/her friend by saying “*bie dan xin* (don’t worry)” or “*ni yiding hui zhaodao yifeng genghaode gongzuo* (you will surely find a better job)” instead of saying “sorry to hear that”.

In English, apology formulae could also convey negative information or ‘bad news’ (Holmes, 1995:156).

Example: A manager (M) was informing one of his employees (F) of the decision to fire her.

A: I’m very sorry, Jane. Really, I’m really sorry. Personally I am fond of you, very much, but it’s that we can get so far. I hope you’ll not be beaten up.

B: No, I’ll never be beaten up.

Moreover, these apology formulae can also be used to show disagreement or disapproval.

Example: In a political talk show, invited guests were having discussion on a law issue. A (M) commented on B’s (M) opinion.

A: I’m sorry, but is the law for one party but not for another?

As discussed so far, the expression “I’m sorry” in English has been demonstrated to have several functions (e.g. showing sympathy, bringing bad news, showing disagreement, etc.), apart from the admission of one’s guilt. The question is whether such expressions can be viewed as apologies and this is where the disagreements appear. Some (for example, Borkin & Reinhart, 1978) argue that such kinds of formulae should not be viewed as apologies as they convey different illocution force; while others include this type of formulae within the scope of studies on apologies (Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990; Holmes,

1990, 1995; Meier, 1992). As Intachakra (2001:150) argues, although the apology formula “I’m sorry” (in the situations that she defines as ‘essential ritualistic apologies’, employed to show sympathy to someone experiencing unfortunate circumstances) does not convey admission of guilt, it at least expresses regret and therefore can be regarded as an apology in its own right. However, none of these studies draw their conclusion based on native speakers’ judgements of what type of meanings they would like to convey. This study aims to gain insights from participants’ evaluation of their concepts of apology and of the functions of apology formulae.

### 2.2.3 Apology Strategy Realization

Up to now, CCSARP has been the most significant investigation of speech act realization of apologies and requests. In CCSARP studies, Olshtain and Cohen (1983) define apologising as a culture-sensitive ‘speech-act set’ of semantic formulae or strategies found to regularly co-occur in apologetic responses (The coding of apologies found in CCSARP is displayed in Appendix A). They suggest this apology speech act set encompass the potential range of apology strategies, any of which may count as an apology. The apology speech act set includes five potential strategies:

1. an Illocutionally Force Indication Device (IFID), e.g.
  - I am sorry;
  - I apologise...;
  - I regret...;
  - Pardon me.
2. an explanation or account of the cause of the violation;
3. an expression of the speaker’s responsibility for the offence;
4. an offer of repair and
5. a promise of forbearance.

In addition to the five basic semantic components, apologies also can be upgraded or downgraded in terms of the impact associated with them. *Upgraders* strengthen the positive impact associated with the apology, while *downgraders* weaken it (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983). For example, by using an intensifying adverbial, i.e. “I’m *very/so/terribly*



sorry”, the speaker expresses greater regret. On the other hand, by acting innocent, i.e. “Really? Am I late?”, the speaker tries to distract the hearer from the offence.

Depending on the degree of directness, a division can be made between explicit and implicit apology strategies. *Explicit apology strategies* refers to IFIDs, such as “I’m sorry”, “please forgive me”, etc. *Implicit apology strategies* thus refers to the other main strategies which are used to state the reason/cause of the offence (‘Explanation or Account’), acknowledge wrongdoing (‘Taking on responsibility’) or justify the wrongdoing (‘Repair’, ‘Future forbearance’).

The most frequently occurring apology strategy in English has generally been found to be a formulaic expression of apology such as “I’m sorry”, “excuse me”, “pardon me” and “forgive me”. The usage of expressions containing ‘sorry’ is relatively dominant over other expressions (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Holmes, 1990; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Owen, 1983).

In the major CCSARP study of apology strategies, Olshtain (1989:71) claims that the languages investigated “did not exhibit significant differences in strategy selection” and showed “surprising similarities in IFID and expression of responsibility preferences across the seven situations”. It is thus concluded that there are “universal manifestations of strategy selection” (Olshtain, 1989:171). However, there were several possible explanations for this finding. First, the data collection instrument was a written questionnaire with limited situations which only reflected campus student life in Western society. Second, the analysis was at a global level and such a universal model was unlikely to reveal culturally specific differences.

Suszczynska (1999) compared the apology strategies of native speakers in English, Polish and Hungarian. The study aimed to explore the differences in the realizations of apologetic responses through a detailed analysis of both the choice and sequential arrangement of strategies, and the content and choice of linguistic forms. In contrast with the overwhelming use of the expression "I'm sorry" in the English data, there is a preference for *Ne haragudjon* ("don't be angry") and *Przepraszam* ("I apologise") respectively in the Hungarian and the Polish data. In addition, she pointed out that the Polish and Hungarians perceived the IFID formula "I'm sorry" in English to be weak in cases of serious offences from their cultural background; however this was found acceptable in English culture. This finding seems to suggest that the syntactic-semantic forms of IFID formulae function as conventional linguistic means to embody culture-specific attitudes and represent modes of social interaction characteristic of a particular culture (Wierzbicka, 1985:500) and it also seems to confirm Wierzbicka's (1991) position that speech acts are not language-independent 'natural kinds' but culture-specific communicative routines. However, it is worth pointing out that the reason for the Polish and Hungarian participants perceived "I'm sorry" as weak could be that they probably translated "I'm sorry" into their own languages literally without fully comprehending the pragmatic function of the formula in English. Overall, it is argued that the present form of politeness theory is not sufficient to explain cross-cultural differences in apologetic responses since they stem less from universal norms of politeness than from culture-specific values and attitudes (Suszczynska 1999:1064).

Excuses and explanations have been found to be a popular apology strategy (Meier, 1992). In her study (2002) of apology strategies produced by native British English speakers, Chinese graduate students and ESL learners, the present researcher distinguished two types of explanations: 1) Explanation with specific reasons and 2) Explanation without specific reasons. She pointed out that "There was a traffic jam" and "Something happened" could



both code as Explanations; however the two responses clearly differ in specificity and persuasiveness. Overall, native British speakers preferred to offer more explicit explanations than native Chinese. In addition, native British used more strategies than Chinese subjects while giving explanations with reasons. Two strategies were defined as 'humor' and 'eliciting sympathy'. These two strategies both function to shorten the distance between the speaker and hearer. For instance:

1. Humor:

Native British speaker (NB): *The traffic was really good tonight.*

2. Eliciting sympathy:

NB: *You know how my boss is!*

NB: *Bloody work! Christ, I need a drink!*

Situations found favourable for explanations were those in which the interlocutors were distant (Cody & McLaughlin, 1985) and those in which the offender felt little responsibility (Schlenker & Darby, 1981). However, Meier (1992) found that the highest number of justifications in her data occurred in two situations with very different degrees of intimacy among interlocutors: one involving friends, the other involving strangers. On the other hand, Holmes (1990) found violations of time and inconvenience likely to prompt some kind of explanation.

Trosborg (1987) found that Danish learners of English failed to take on responsibility in situations where native speakers of English tended to acknowledge responsibility. The sub-strategies used to deny the responsibility included: 1. explicit denial of responsibility; 2. implicit denial of responsibility; 3. justification; 4. blaming someone else and 5. attacking the complainer. In terms of acknowledgement of responsibility, she stated that what distinguished learner performance from native speakers in this strategy was not the frequency with which it was used, but rather the combinations in which it occurred.

In her study comparing Chinese learners of English and native British English speakers, the present researcher (2002) found that there was a significantly higher use of the strategy 'offer a repair' indicating material compensation by Chinese subjects than by British subjects in a written discourse completion test. She also indicated that this strategy was mainly used in close relationships or when the offence was light enough for harmony to be restored by simple material compensation.

The various apology strategies can be used in combination with other strategies. A study exploring sequences of strategies (Meier, 1992) discovered that the most likely strategies to occur first in the responses of Austrian German speakers were routine formulae (e.g. *leid*) and emotives (e.g. *oh, nein!*). Similarly, Suszcynska (1999) found 64% of the utterances of all three groups (English, Hungarian and Polish) in her study started with emotional exclamations followed by an IFID. Single strategy IFIDs (e.g. *I'm sorry*) occurred frequently in Holmes' (1990) study. In contrast, in this researcher's (2002) study, none of the British speakers was found to use a single strategy on its own. They always combined other strategies with their responses. This difference may be due to the effect of different data collection methods. In Holmes' (1990) study, all the data were naturally occurring in situations the researcher did not have control over. On the other hand, the data in Xiang (2002) study was elicited by a written questionnaire and the designed situations were all based on a single type of offence, i.e. being late. A written questionnaire cannot reflect what participants would say in real life situations. However, naturally occurring data tends to be difficult to compare cross-culturally as there are usually too many variables involved.

Groupings of strategies into broader categories have, to a limited extent, been examined in the literature as well. House (1989) noted a tendency in her British participants to use interpersonal strategies which were 'other-directed'. Obeng (1999) classified three different ways of combining explicit and implicit apology strategies. It was argued that the



extensive use of implicit apologies in Akan discourse indicated a different conceptualization of face and cultural values in Africa.

The classification of the above apology strategies varies from study to study. First, the numbers of categories are different. As shown in the previous section, in the CCSARP project, five main strategies were used (Cohen & Olshtain, 1983; Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989). However, in Holtgraves' (1989) taxonomy, only three categories were included. Others used more detailed analysis and more categories. For example, Trosborg (1987) employed seven and Meier (1992) used seventeen.

Second, there have been different approaches and operationalizations in terms of the category types. For example, Garcia (1989) regards *Expressions of regret + Account* as one composite category. However, routine formulae are analyzed in most studies separately from other strategies. Since any inconsistency in the application of units of analysis can confuse distinctions between different strategies, the results of different studies often conflict.

*Taking on responsibility* presents a similar problem. In the CCSARP coding manual, several sub-categories under this main strategy to some extent are rejections of responsibility, such as 1. refusal to acknowledge guilt; 2. admission of facts but not of responsibility; and 3. pretended to be offended. Trosborg (1987), on the other hand, divides the CCSARP category of 'taking on responsibility' into two contrasting categories: 'doesn't take on responsibilities' and 'acknowledges responsibility'. It would therefore be possible for two language varieties in a contrastive study to generate no apparent differences concerning taking on responsibility under the CCSARP coding system, but to show major differences under Trosborg's classification of the same data.

Another category, *Concern for hearer*, also received different treatment. It has been classified in some studies as a main strategy (e.g. Trosborg 1987, Suszcynska 1999), while as a substrategy of *Redress* by Bergman & Kasper (1993) and as an intensifier along with “very” and “terribly” in the CCSARP project. However, none of the above studies considered the importance of intonation when classify such complex strategy.

As can be seen, not all the studies offer a clear definition of different strategies nor distinguish them or classify them in a consistent way. As Meier (1998) points out, reasons underlying the category distinctions made are rarely discussed, which makes a principled evaluation of them difficult. Moreover, their overlapping and contradictory taxonomies result in incomparability of units of analysis, leading to different claims across studies.

#### **2.2.4 Scope of Apology Studies**

The majority of research to date has examined apology behavior in a variety of Western cultures and languages. These studies obviously contribute towards the identification of a universally valid speech act set for apology and the different contextual factors which affect the choice of apology strategies. However, as Bergman & Kasper (1993:86) suggest, “It is requisite to extend the scope of study to non-Western languages and cultures to advance the fundamental issues in cross-cultural pragmatics; namely, the universality and specificity of linguistic action”. This study contributes to filling a gap in this field of cross-cultural pragmatics studies with Chinese data.

Different perspectives (culture-specific realization, contrastive pragmatics, interlanguage pragmatics) on research into apologies have led to different research methods and findings. Before establishing the niche for this study, it is useful to review how the existing studies have drawn on different dimensions.



The research goals of apology studies from a culture-specific perspective are rather similar, namely to describe apology strategies and identify the contextual factors. Vollmer and Olshtain (1989) researched the apology realization preference of 200 speakers of German, focusing on the relationship between their patterns of apology and social/situational parameters such as social status, social distance, hearer's expectation of an apology and severity of offence. They made the following two points: First, the subjects used high percentages of IFIDs and responsibility strategies in all situations; second, intensification of apology was highly related to situational parameters (e.g. the lower the speaker's social status, the more he/she used intensifiers).

Holmes (1989) investigated the realization of apologies in an ethnographically collected corpus of 183 apology interchanges produced by adult native speakers of New Zealand English. The data from the study provided very few instances of repair. Expressions of concern for the hearer ("I hope you were not too angry at me.") or promises of forbearance ("it won't happen again") were used extremely rarely by subjects across situations. In their attempt to explain the above findings, Bergman & Kasper (1993:86) argue that "the naturalistic data set does not provide an adequate baseline for the two types of elicited data", namely role-plays and discourse completion test.

Another perspective which has enriched the field of cross-cultural pragmatics is based on attempts to extend the scope of traditional contrastive linguistic procedures beyond the levels of phonology, syntax, and semantics to embrace discourse levels of language use (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Many of the studies within CCSARP share this interest. However, the issue of universality versus cultural-specificity is still hotly debated. This issue calls for more languages and cultures to be examined from a contrastive pragmatic perspective, as well as for cross-culturally valid analytical categories for the study of speech acts.

Tanaka, Spencer-Oatey and Cray (2000) explored the cultural differences between Japanese and English responses to unfounded accusations. They were interested in finding out whether people apologise in situations where 'guilt' and 'responsibility' were in doubt. They used questionnaires with university students in Japan, Britain and Canada. Subjects were asked to respond to a prompt by writing the exact words they would use in reply (in English and Japanese). In addition, they were asked to provide some contextual assessment of the scenarios: how annoying they thought the problem was for the person complaining; how far they felt responsible for the problem. Their findings do not seem to fit in with either Western or Japanese conceptions of Japanese versus English apologising behaviour: specifically that Japanese tend to apologise more. However, this outcome may be an artifact of the research procedure, attributable to the situations selected.

Reiter (2000) carried out a contrastive study of requests and apologies in order to explore the similarities and differences in linguistic politeness in Britain and Uruguay. Open role play was used as the data collection method and the data analysis was based on Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness framework. The results seemed to confirm the claim by Blum-Kulka (1989) that IFIDs and "expressions of responsibility" emerge to varying degrees across all situations in both languages, whereas the other semantic apology formulae were situation-dependent. Speakers of Uruguayan Spanish showed a clear preference for non-intensification of their expressions of apology. In both languages, the preferred way of taking responsibility was to admit the facts. Whereas significant differences were found in the choice and realization of apology strategies in terms of the use of intensified IFIDs and the expression of embarrassment in these two cultures, intercultural differences did not prove to be significant. In addition, the study supported the claim of Brown & Levinson (1987) that British culture is a negative politeness oriented culture. Definition of negative politeness and details of politeness theory will be discussed in Section 2.4.



Similar research was undertaken by Intachadra (2001), investigating linguistic politeness in British English and Thai through an examination of three types of speech act: compliments, apologies and thanks. The study was based on two sets of data: field note taking and discourse completion tests (known as DCTs). The data revealed a tendency for the two groups of speakers to use these three politeness devices in a different manner, reflecting cross-cultural differences in social norms and value systems, differences in terms of the use of apologies, the functions of apology, the topic of apology and the impact of contextual factors on production of apology strategies. The responses given were compared and analyzed within pragmatic and sociolinguistic theoretical frameworks. Apology formulae were used in much wider contexts in British English than Thai and also employed more functions. The apology strategy "promise of forbearance" was not found in the Thai data. While most apologies occurred with strangers in Britain, most apologies took place between friends in Thailand. Moreover, regarding social relationships, people with more power and greater seniority would rarely apologise to those below them in Thailand, and people would reject more apologies in Britain.

Studies of intercultural communication and second language acquisition (for example, Condon & Yousef, 1975; Damen, 1987; Kramsch, 1993; and Seelye, 1984) examined the importance of understanding the socio-cultural values of the target language for those engaged in both second language learning and intercultural communication. They found that mastery of L2 linguistic patterns alone does not ensure effective communication in the target language. To be able to communicate in another language, one must understand not only the language but also the underlying principles of that culture.

By foregrounding the importance of cultural understanding in second language development, these scholars have made great contributions to both intercultural communication and language education. Many of the CCSARP studies were interested in

the communicative competence of non-native speakers of English and in the degree of pragmatic transfer between a native and a target language. This falls in the field known as 'interlanguage pragmatics'. It has been pointed out that transfer effect could be distinguished at two different levels: the sociopragmatic level and the pragmalinguistic level (Maeshiba, Yoshinaga & Kasper 1996). Sociopragmatic transfer has been found in the following three areas (ibid, 1996:155):

1. Learners' perception of contextual factors
2. Assessment whether carrying out a particular linguistic action is socially appropriate
3. Overall politeness style adopted in an encounter

Pragmalinguistic transfer on the other hand refers to learners' use of conventions of meanings and form, affecting the illocutionary force and politeness value of interlanguage utterances (ibid, 1996:155). Both levels of transfer can be positive or negative. The definitions of these two notions are listed as following:

Positive transfer refers to the projection of first language-based sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge where such projections result in perceptions and behaviors consistent with those of second language users.

By contrast, negative transfer refers to the projection of first language-based sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge where such projections result in perceptions and behaviors different from those of second language users. (Maeshiba, Yoshinaga & Kasper 1996:155)

Bergman & Kasper (1993) undertook a study looking at perceptions and performance in native and nonnative apology in English. Using questionnaire data, the study focused on exploring the impact of contextual factors and severity of offence. The factors being assessed were: 1. severity of offence; 2. obligation to apologise; 3. likelihood of apology acceptance; 4. offender's face-loss and 5. distance. The findings supported Olshtain's (1989:160) hypothesis that "severity of offence is the representative contextual factor in the socio-pragmatic set of the apology". Despite the overall assessment of contextual factors by American and Thai participants seeming to be consistent, differences existed in their perception of at least one contextual variable, with most emphasis on the obligation to



apologise, least on the likelihood (Bergman & Kasper, 1993:93). In terms of the contextual factors affecting subjects' strategy selection, it was found that the most sensitive strategy was upgrading, while no effect of contextual factors was found on downgrading responsibility and offering repair. It was claimed that the strategy differences could be attributed tentatively to pragmatic transfer from Thai apology patterns.

While these studies helped demonstrate socio-cultural transfer between languages, they addressed mostly differences in speech patterns between languages (different ways of expressing gratitude, apologies, etc.). In other words, they looked primarily at the learners' observable socio-cultural transfer, and overlooked the transfer of deeper socio-cultural values and beliefs that caused the surface changes in both what was said, and how.

The above review of studies of apology seems to indicate that, although contextual factors and context are acknowledged to be embedded in cultural values - especially in contrastive-studies - only rarely has an apology study explicitly set out to explain apology behavior in terms of underlying cultural attitudes (e.g. Meier 1996, Xiang 2002). In other words, the pragmatics of apology has generally been descriptive rather than explanatory. The current study thus aims to contribute to the understanding of how cultural values and assumptions affect the ways in which native Chinese and British speakers, as well as language learners, apologise. It is therefore not merely an identification of the contextual factors that influence linguistic choices but rather - at a deeper, explanatory level - the culturally-determined valuations of these factors. As Meier (1998:226) put it:

The specific situations (with their specific constellations of contextual factors) elicited in the various studies are unlikely to replicate themselves in actual encounters. What is replicated is the fact that culturally-informed perceptions of the contextual factors (e.g. valuations of equality, space, time, distance, individualism) significantly affect the choices made in apology behavior across situations, both intra- and interculturally.

In short, this study is a cross-cultural study combining contrastive and interlanguage perspectives with a focus on exploring deep cultural values involved in the production and evaluation of apology strategies.

## **2.3 Contextual Variables**

Brown & Levinson (1987) claim that contextual variables have a crucial influence on people's choices of apology strategy. Their theory (1978:76) predicts that the weightiness of face-threatening acts (FTAs), computed by adding the values of social distance, dominance, and degree of imposition as perceived by actors in a given context, determines the kind and amount of redress afforded in the performance of FTAs. In this section I will discuss five important variables related to apologising in the present study: power, social distance, severity of offence, rights and obligations and gender. In terms of methodology issues, determining whether the contextual conditions in which the speech act behavior under study occurs are perceived as the same or different by the groups to be compared becomes a key problem in cross-cultural and cross-linguistic action (Blum-Kulka & House, 1989). Wolfson, Marmor & Jones (1989:180) comment in respect to apologies that "a cross-linguistic study of apologies may well reveal that the notions of offense and obligation are culture-specific and must, therefore, become an object of study in themselves". Bergman & Kasper (1993) also point out, in the cross-cultural study of apology, it is essential to establish what constitutes an offence, how members of different cultures perceive offence contexts, and how these perceptions are reflected in output strategies. I shall consider these issues in more details in Chapter 3.

### **2.3.1 Power**

Several classic studies have established power as a key variable. Power is typically operationalized in terms of unequal role relations, such as teacher-student. Participant



relations are a very important group of factors that influence the use of apology strategies.

Brown and Gilman (1972) define the variable 'power' as follows:

One person may be said to have power over another in the degree that he is able to control the behavior of the other. Power is a relationship between at least two persons, and it is nonreciprocal in the sense that both cannot have power in the same area of behavior (Brown and Gilman 1972:255).

French and Raven's (1959) classic taxonomy identifies five main bases of power:

1. reward power - if person A has control over positive outcomes that person B desires,
2. coercive power - if person A has control over negative outcomes that person B wants to avoid,
3. expert power - if person A has some special knowledge or expertise that person B wants or needs,
4. legitimate power - if person A has the right to prescribe or expect certain things from person B,
5. referent power - if person B admires person A and wants to be like him/her in some respect

This classification helps define most role relations, but it is still not clear in the case of waiters/customers or taxi drivers/passengers (Spencer-Oatey 2000). From one perspective, customers and passengers have power (reward power and coercive power) over waiters/taxi drivers, in that they can choose whether or not to use the restaurant/taxi company again in the future, and this may motivate the waiter/taxi driver to provide good service. On the other hand, from another perspective, waiters and taxi drivers have power (legitimate power and coercive power) over customers/passengers, in that they have the right to make certain demands, such as whether people should wait to be seated, or how many people can sit in the taxi and so on.

### **2.3.2 Social Distance**

Most people have an intuitive understanding of what it means to have a 'close' or 'distant' relationship, but this can involve many different strands. Individuals may work closely with others for a long time, but dislike them and so regard them as distant. Spencer-Oatey

(1996:7) lists the following possible components of social distance (often overlapping), based on a review of a range of pragmatic studies:

1. Social similarity/difference (e.g. Brown and Gilman, 1972)
2. Frequency of contact (e.g. Slugoski & Turnbull, 1988)
3. Length of acquaintance (e.g. Slugoski and Turnbull, 1988)
4. Familiarity, or how well people know each other (e.g. Holmes, 1990)
5. Sense of like-mindedness (e.g. Brown and Gilman, 1972)
6. Positive/negative affect (e.g. Baxter, 1984)

There are mixed views concerning the effect of social distance on apology strategy. One view holds that increased familiarity results in less elaborate apologies (Fraser, 1981). Similarly, Cohen, Olshtain & Rosenstein (1986) showed that friends received less mitigating strategies than did strangers. The opposing view, however, argues that more elaborate apologies are used among friends (Baxter, 1984; Holmes, 1990; Meier, 1992; Trosborg, 1987). These latter studies support Wolfson's (1988) 'bulge' theory, which claims there is less security in relationships with friends, rendering negotiations riskier, thus leading to more negotiation.

Thomas (1995) points out that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between power and distance, and that in CCSARP the researchers did not maintain the distinction in practice. This is because in many cultures the two variables co-occur. However, this is not necessarily the case in all cultures. For example, Spencer-Oatey (1997), in research into British and Chinese conceptions of tutor-postgraduate student relations, found that the variables power and distance were significantly correlated for the British respondents, but unrelated for the Chinese respondents.

### **2.3.3 Severity of Offence**

Since apologising is viewed as a compensatory action for an offence, in the doing of which speaker (S) was causally involved and which is costly to hearer (H) (Kasper & Blum-



Kulka, 1989), how costly the offence is may impact directly on individuals' strategies for apologising. As Spencer-Oatey (2000:18) puts it:

If the offence is minor, the apology will be routine and is unlikely to be face-threatening. By contrast, if the offense is more substantial, the fact of apologising can be very face-threatening to the apologiser: it can threaten his/her quality face (sense of personal competence), and if the apology is very public, it can also threaten his/her identity face (sense of standing among others).

However, opposing conclusions have also been reached regarding this variable. On the one hand, severe offences have been claimed to result in more elaborate apologies as suggested above (Fraser, 1981; Holmes, 1990; Olshtain, 1989). On the other hand, Bergman & Kasper (1993) did not find severity to be related to their strategy type *responsibility* and found that a high severity offence actually gave rise to fewer routine formulae than did less severe and medium offences. In other studies (McLaughlin, Cody, & Rosenstein, 1983), neither the number of strategies nor their sequence correlated with severity of the offence. Indeed, whether the severity of offence is high or low also relates closely to the situation or context, and this could be interpreted differently across cultures. The inconsistency of the above findings may be due to different constructions of the situations (naturalistic vs elicited), as well as to subjective criteria of severity, determined mainly by researchers not participants. It thus seems useful to investigate not only how people from different cultures use apology strategies according to changing perceptions of the severity of the offence, but also why people change their strategies in certain ways.

### **2.3.4 Rights and Obligations**

There have been studies aimed at identifying different motivations for apologies and the situations in which people feel obligated to apologise.

Barnlund & Yoshioka (1990) provided one taxonomy of four topics (i.e. mismanagement of time, failure to complete an assignment, incompetent execution of a task and breach of social etiquette), whereas Meier (1996) proposed four different topics (i.e. time, possessions, space and trust). The most widely adopted classification was suggested by Holmes (1990; 1995). This includes six topics (i.e. inconvenience, space, talk, social gaffe, time and possessions). According to these studies (Holmes, 1990, 1995; Intachakra, 2001), inconvenience seems to be the most common motivation for apologising.

Wolfson, Marmor & Jones (1989:178-9) summarized seven types of behaviours Americans feel obliged to apologise for, the first three of which were identified in the CCSARP:

1. not keeping a social or work-related commitment
2. not respecting property
3. causing damage or discomfort to others
4. making others responsible for one's welfare
5. expecting another to be available at all times
6. confusing strangers with acquaintances
7. protecting another from sanctions from those in authority over them.

That the other four types were not featured in CCSARP could be due to the type of situations involved in the Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs) not being as reflective as naturally observed data. In their study, participant observation was used and therefore was more likely to yield a richer set of variables to account for differences in apology behaviour.

### **2.3.5 Gender**

Till now, not many studies have investigated apology behaviour in terms of gender differences. Holmes (1995) examined gender differences in apologies and found both similarities and differences between males and females. The most obvious differences that her study found could be summarized in three points:



1. Women used significantly more apologies than men.
2. Women apologised most to hearers of equal power, men to women of different status.
3. Women apologised most to female friends, men to socially distant women (pp.397-380).

Furthermore, the women in Holmes' study apologised more for violations of space and speaking rights, whereas the men apologised more for infractions involving possessions and time. The males and females in Meier's (1992) study, however, evidenced a high degree of agreement in their ranking of the seriousness of situations, and no major differences in strategy use were revealed. A minor difference identified in this study was intensifier use: women tended to use *really* while men used *terribly* more.

Ito (1998) compared American and Japanese males and females (40 subjects in total) in terms of their use and distribution of apology strategies in seven given situations. She also investigated the effects of social distance, social power, severity of offence and obligation to apologise on the choice of apology strategies. An evaluative questionnaire and a DCT were applied in this study. Significant cultural differences were found in the way Americans and Japanese evaluated and produced apology strategies, but no clear difference between males and females. To Ito (1998:32), this result indicates that cultural difference has a greater influence on the choice of apology strategy than does gender difference. However, this might be due to the small sample of the study and the limited situations it incorporated.

## **2.4 Politeness, Face and Rapport**

### **2.4.1 Politeness as a Pragmatic Phenomenon**

Thomas (1995:149) points out that, under the heading of politeness, people have discussed five separate, though related, sets of phenomena:

- Politeness as a real-world goal
- Deference

- Register
- Politeness as a surface level phenomenon
- Politeness as an illocutionary phenomenon

She distinguishes politeness from deference in terms of their generality (150):

‘Deference is connected with politeness, but is a distinct phenomenon; it is the opposite of familiarity. It refers to the respect we show to other people by virtue of their higher status, greater age; etc. Politeness is a more general matter of showing (or rather, of giving the appearance of showing) consideration to others.’

She further distinguishes register from politeness and argues that, as with deference, register is primarily a sociolinguistic phenomenon and has little connection with pragmatics, since people have no real choice about whether or not to use formal language in formal situations.

Notably, Thomas also views politeness as both an utterance level and pragmatic phenomenon. Again, she argues that studies of linguistic forms are sociolinguistic in nature; they only become pragmatics when they investigate how a particular form in a particular language is used strategically in order to achieve the speaker’s goal.

The present study focuses on politeness as a pragmatic phenomenon, where politeness is interpreted as a strategy (or series of strategies) employed by a speaker to achieve a variety of goals, such as promoting or maintaining harmonious relations (Leech, 1980; Brown & Levinson 1987; Thomas 1995).

#### **2.4.2 ‘Face-saving’ View of Politeness**

In Fraser’s (1990) review of four approaches to politeness, Brown and Levinson’s approach is known as the ‘face-saving view’. The other three are: 1. the social-norm view (Anderson 1996); 2. the conversational-maxim view (Grice, 1975; Lakoff, 1973; Leech, 1983); and 3. the conversational-contract view (Fraser, 1990).



Fraser points out that one strength of Brown and Levinson's approach over the rule-oriented presentations of politeness proposed by Lakoff and Leech is that the former are attempting to explain politeness by deriving it from more fundamental notions of what it is to be a human being, i.e., being rational and having face wants (1990:161). Kasper (1994) argues that the 'face-saving view' of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson has been the most influential politeness model to date. Holtgraves and Yang (1990) comment that Brown and Levinson's theory is significant in providing a comprehensive framework for explaining cultural similarities and differences in language use. Fukushima (2000:47) reviews the above four approaches to politeness and argues the following:

The social-norm view is more like an everyday view of etiquette or manners, rather than a theory of politeness, and this fails to provide a theoretical base. The conversational-maxim view has some limitations and it is not sufficiently well formulated to be tested empirically, although Grice's work has provided a foundation for Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. The face-saving view, proposed in Brown and Levinson's theory provides a precise formulation of politeness and a basis for making cross-cultural comparison. The conversational-contract view is not yet sufficiently well formulated for empirical research.

The notion of 'face' is the basic concept of Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness. According to Brown and Levinson (1987:61), 'face' is defined as 'the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself'. In other words, they view face as a key motivating force underlying politeness. They characterize two types of face in terms of participant wants: negative face and positive face. Negative face refers to "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his action be unimpeded by others" (p.62). Positive face refers to "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" (p.62). They propose that apologies are inherently face-threatening to the speaker's positive face. Based on the concept of these two aspects of face, Brown and Levinson develop two types of politeness. Negative politeness is redressive action addressed to the hearer's negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded (Brown and Levinson 1987:129). Apologising is one of the

discourse strategies used to evidence restraint and a desire not to impose on another, and can therefore be viewed as negative politeness. Positive politeness is redress directed to the addressee's positive face, his perennial desire that his wants (or the actions/acquisitions/value resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable (Brown and Levinson 1987:121). It refers to language strategies that attend to people's needs to be appreciated and approved of, such as making compliments, seeking agreement.

In all, Brown and Levinson identify five levels of strategies that potentially threaten the face of the involved parties in an interactive situation. These five levels of strategy are:

1. Bald, on record (most direct);
2. Positive politeness;
3. Negative politeness;
4. Off-record (hinting);
5. Avoiding face-threatening act.

Brown and Levinson claim that three factors determine which strategies should be applied and they are universal. These three factors are:

1. The social distance of speaker and hearer;
2. The relative power relation;
3. The absolute ranking of imposition in the particular culture (1987:74).

### **2.4.3 Face and Cross-cultural Variation**

Some criticisms have been made of Brown and Levinson's model of politeness in terms of its claim to 'universality'. In Britain "politeness" is typically used to describe negative politeness, which is presumed to be "a good thing". In this respect, I believe that the Chinese translation of "politeness", *ke qi*, also has a similar connotation. *Ke qi*, is a basic principle that Chinese observe in their everyday speaking practices. This notion prescribes that communication between self and other should be construed in a thoughtful, mannerly,



pleasant and civil fashion. The ritual of *ke qi*, however, is most prominent in the Chinese host-guest context and does not fit well with Brown and Levinson's negative face (also see Gu 1990). Although the "offer-decline" ritual is essential to host-guest interactions, when used in the context of close relationships, especially family relationships, it can be perceived and interpreted as insincere, distant, and removed.

A number of scholars working with non-western languages, such as Chinese and Japanese, have recently argued that face is applicable only to some Western languages and is not appropriate for the analysis of East Asian languages (Gu 1990, Ide 1989, Matsumoto 1988, Mao 1994, Nwoye 1992). With regard to Chinese criticisms, Gu (1990:241-242) claims that Brown and Levinson's model is not suitable for Chinese data for two reasons. First, what is considered threatening to negative face; second, the perceptions of politeness are different. Gu bases his observations of the Chinese notion of negative face on the fact that such speech acts as inviting, offering and promising in Chinese are not generally regarded as threatening to the hearer's negative face. On the other hand, Mao (1994) argues that the Chinese concept of politeness and face emphasizes the group, whereas Brown and Levinson's puts more emphasis on the individual. However, Gu provides no definition of Chinese negative face; in fact, he does not state whether the concept of negative face applies to Chinese interaction at all. In Fukushima's words (2000:60), the Chinese criticisms do not amount to a refutation of Brown and Levinson's theory in terms of face and universality:

....the Chinese researchers have not fully discussed Brown and Levinson's positive face, although Mao admits *lian*'s resemblance to positive face. Instead, they have mainly criticized Brown and Levinson's negative face. It seems to me that they have discussed some features of positive face, when they were attacking Brown and Levinson's negative face.

It is important to recognize that there are cross-cultural differences in the use of the concept 'face'. Many scholars agree that diverse conceptualizations of face used in

Western and Asian cultures are based on different conceptualizations of the self, and differing aims of communication in Western and Asian cultures (Morisaki and Gudykunst 1994, Ting-Toomey 1994, Foley 1997, Scollon & Scollon 1995, Gao & Ting-Toomey 1998). The dimension of collectivist and individualist cultures provides a basis for analyzing and interpreting such differences in values and communication styles (as discussed in the next section).

Spencer-Oatey (2000:18) points out that whether apologies are face-threatening or not to the person apologising depends on the severity of the offence:

If the offence is minor, the apology will be routine and is unlikely to be face-threatening. By contrast, if the offence is more substantial, the fact of apologising can be very face-threatening to the apologisee: it can threaten his/her quality face (sense of personal competence), and if the apology is very public, it can also threaten his/her identity face (sense of standing among others).

However, to what extent a speaker regards apologising to a hearer as a threat to his/her own face may differ culturally. For example, it seems that both Japanese and westerners hold similar stereotypical conceptions of apologising behaviour in each other's cultures; namely, that Japanese apologise more frequently than native speakers of English, and that an apology in Japanese does not necessarily mean that the person is acknowledging a fault (Tanaka, Spencer-Oatey, & Cray, 2000:76). In other words, to apologise does not seem to affect the speaker's positive face in Japanese culture, and he/she still maintains his/her face needs.

Obeng (1999) argues an apology may be even less face-threatening for the apologisee when he/she is unaware of the implications of the offence. In such a situation, if an apology recipient refuses to give a positive response to the apology, he/she would most certainly be labelled an unforgiving person - a label which could in turn damage the image



of that individual as well as of the society (particularly his or her close relatives) in Akan culture (1999:712).

As Suszcaynska (1999) argues, the concepts of face-saving, face-threatening and support may not mean the same for different language groups. In addition, the function of apology “to restore equilibrium” (Holmes, 1990:161) only can be performed in a manner appropriate to the culture of the speakers, where being polite (however defined) is only one of many concerns (Suszcaynska 1999:1055). Therefore, it seems useful to build a model which can measure and evaluate the concepts of apologising in cultural terms. In Chapter 3, the issues of how cross-cultural data were analysed in this study will be discussed in more detail.

#### **2.4.4 Face in Chinese Culture**

If culture can be understood through key words in their indigenous forms (Wierzbicka 1997), the *lian/mianzi* dichotomy is definitely one that should not be ignored in order to understand Chinese culture (Zhu, 2003). In Chinese, ‘face’ can be translated as *lian* or *mianzi* and both terms are commonly used in everyday life. However, it has been argued by some Chinese scholars that these two terms do not have the same implications as Brown and Levinson’s positive and negative face (Gu, 1990).

According to Hu (1944), *lian* is a moral concept. Loss of *lian* would mean public disgrace while *mianzi*, as a social concept, is less serious and consequently the loss of *mianzi* may cause embarrassment, but is less damaging to one’s integrity. For example, *buyao lian* means ‘shameless’ and contains extremely negative connotations. In this sense, the Chinese concept *lian* is close to Brown & Levinson’s positive face, but has little in common with ‘negative face’. On the other hand, *mianzi* is also concerned with reputation

or prestige but not to the same degree of desirability as *lian*. For instance, *buyao mianzi* means 'regardless of one's face' and can even be interpreted as a positive image. Sayings such as *siyao mianzi*, *huo shou zui* (who suffers because of loving one's face too much) indicates *mianzi* is a surface concept, referring to the way one would like to present oneself to others, though this image might not match with reality. Therefore, *mianzi* could be superficial and dependant on the other's perception of self. The group-oriented concept of face has been highlighted by many scholars who examine collectivist cultures (Doi 1981; Matsumoto 1989; Ide 1989; Gu 1990; Mao 1994; Nwoye 1992). They argue that, while face-wants and face-work are central aspects of social interaction in societies where individualism is a basic cultural trait and where self-identity and self-esteem are highly valued, 'face' has a very different connotation and weight in societies where role structures and group membership are central.

Ho's study (1976) compared the concept of face in the East with that of individualism or self in the West, emphasizing that face is a concept that exists in and is constrained by one's relationship with others. It is a "function of the degree of congruence between judgements of his [sic] total condition in life, including his actions as well as those of people closely associated with him, and the social expectations the others have placed upon him" (Ho, 1976, P883). *Mainzi* concerns the projection and the claiming of public image (Ting-Toomey 1988). Facework management, that is understanding others' needs and expectations with regard to face, and knowing how to negotiate face with others, is thus not only essential in maintaining existing role relationships and preserving interpersonal harmony, but is also an integral part of the development of the Chinese self. Concern for face has significant consequences in many aspects of Chinese speaking practices (e.g. Bond and Lee 1981; Wierzbicka 1996). However, as Zhu (2003) points out, while *mianzi* prevents conflict and reinforces harmony in interpersonal communication, it unfortunately



can have negative effects on individuals and society once it loses its balance. One example she gives is that its harmony-oriented goals may encourage people not only to tolerate inequality and injustice, but also to stay content with the current situation, however unsatisfying the situation is.

In addition to the individual and group face distinction, Ho (1994:274) points out that the Chinese conception of face is not restricted to situational encounters:

According to the Chinese conception, face may be defined in terms of the more enduring, publicly perceived attributes that function to locate a person's position in his/her social network. Thus defined, a person's face is largely consistent over time and across situations, unless there is a significant change in public perceptions of his/her conduct, performance, or social status.

Measurement of face could reflect relative weights attributed to such as the following: biographical variables (e.g. age, sex), relational attributes (e.g. marriage ties), social status indicators (e.g. educational attainment, occupational status, and wealth), formal title/position/rank, personal reputation (moral or amoral) and integrity (Ho, 1994:276). As Ho points out, different cultures attach varying degrees of importance to different attributes, so the bases of face could be very different in different nations and social groups.

#### **2.4.5 Perceptions of Rapport**

More recently, many authors have pointed out that politeness is a contextual judgment, and no linguistic structures can be identified as inherently polite or impolite (Holmes 1995, Watts 2003, Locher 2004, Spencer-Oatey 2005). In other words, it is not behaviour that is polite or impolite, but rather (im)politeness results from people's evaluation of a behaviour, based on their subjective judgment about social appropriateness. Spencer-Oatey considers politeness as a term which contains evaluative meanings, such as warm, friendly, considerate, respectful, deferential, insolent, aggressive, rude (2005:97). She further points

out that people's judgments about social appropriateness are based primarily on their expectations, which in turn are derived from their beliefs about behaviour.

According to Spencer-Oatey (2000), politeness in traditional terms and politeness theory have been limited to harmonious aspect of social relations; however, people may want to be seen as competent, trustworthy, strong, etc, rather than as pleasant and likeable. Therefore, she suggests 'rapport management' as a broader term to refer to the management of interpersonal relations, i.e. the use of language to promote, maintain or threaten harmonious social relations. She suggests that there are three key elements that form the basis of rapport management: behavioural expectations, face sensitivities and interactional wants. Politeness or impoliteness judgments derive from behavioral expectations. There are four interconnected bases of behavioural expectations: contractual/legal agreements and requirements; explicit and implicit role specifications; interactional principles and behavioural conventions; norms and protocols. Apology is seen as one of the conventions identified by Spencer-Oatey (2005). There are two proposed interactional principles (also defined as sociality rights, Spencer-Oatey 2000): the equity principle/right and the association principle/right. The equity principle refers to people's fundamental belief that they are entitled to personal consideration from others and should be treated fairly; the association principle to the fundamental belief that they are entitled to an association with others which maintains the existing relationship they have with them. There have been few studies examining apology behaviour from this perspective. It would be interesting to find out if any different behavioural expectations (and if so, what kind) would affect the ways Chinese and British people produce and evaluate apologies.

In terms of face, Spencer-Oatey (2005:102) draws a distinction between two fundamental types of face: *respectability* face (also defined as *quality* face, Spencer-Oatey 2000) and *identity* face. Respectability face refers to the prestige, honor or 'good name' that a person



or social group holds and claims within a (broader) community. Identity face, on the other hand, is a situation-specific face sensitivity that is highly vulnerable. Spencer-Oatey relates respectability face with Chinese notions of *mianzi* and *lian* (Ho, 1976) as discussed previously, and identity face with Goffman's notion of face (1967) but including claims to social group membership. She further proposes that people's claims to identity face are based on the positive social values that they associate with their various self-aspects. A range of elements including the following: bodily features and control, possessions and belongings, performance/skills, social behavior, and verbal behavior are influential on people's face sensitivities. People may attach different importance to different qualities due to their personal value systems as well as to social contexts.

Interactional goals were considered to be the third element that can affect rapport management judgments. Spencer-Oatey (2005:107) categorizes two interconnected types of goals: transactional goals and relational goals. Transactional goals refer to achieving a 'concrete' task such as obtaining written approval for something or reaching a business deal. Relational goals aim at effective relationship management, such as peace-making, promoting friendship, or exerting control.

The importance of introducing perceptions of rapport lies in the fact that they offer a broader analytical framework to examine socio-cultural behaviour such as apologising and also embrace various inter-related elements which influence people's linguistic choices. The concept of rapport management allows me to explore and interpret apology behaviour in this study from different perspectives.

## **2.5 Cultural Dimensions of the Study**

### **2.5.1 Defining Culture**

Culture is notoriously difficult to define (Spencer-Oatey 2000). In 1952, the American anthropologists, Kroeber and Kluckhohn, critically reviewed concepts and definitions of culture, and compiled a list of 164 different definitions (Bond, Zegarac, and Spencer-Oatey 2000:50). Of these many definitions, Kluckhohn's own (cited in Kroeber and Kluckhohn, p. 86) is widely quoted:

Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values.

Many other definitions of culture have similarly given values a key role in differentiating cultures one from another, and it is to this interpretation that behavioural scientists have most often turned to explain observed differences between and across cultural groups.

The conceptualization of culture has undergone considerable changes in the field of cross-cultural and inter-cultural communications. It has moved from a more traditional approach, which used characteristics such as race, nationality, ethnicity or geographic origin to operationalize culture, towards viewing culture as a learned set of shared interpretations about values and beliefs. Certainly, the latter approach opens more subpopulations to investigation; however, the problem becomes one of determining sufficient distinctive features to delineate different cultures (Wiseman 2003).

In this study, I will adopt Spencer-Oatey's (2000:4) definition of culture in terms of ethnolinguistic and/or national identity, as it is the most closely related to the scope and purpose of the study:



Culture is a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioural conventions, and basic assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member's behaviour and each member's interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour.

One danger of conducting cross-cultural communication studies is ignoring individual-level mediators of cultural-level phenomena. Some behaviour is a function of cultural norms and rules, and some is due to individual differences within cultures. Therefore, it is important to consider the importance of individual-level mediators which allows researchers to determine if their samples are representative of the cultural dimension under study.

### **2.5.2 Apology and Cultural Values**

As mentioned previously that apology, as an important speech act, reflects deep social cultural values of each society. The interrelationship between apology and cultural values has been studied in various fields and go beyond merely communication. For instance, literature on manners, so called conduct manuals and etiquette books, are one type of cultural resources available in many cultures to people who find themselves in the position of needing to apologize. While the degree to which these people actually apologize according to the norms depicted in this type of literature may not be directly inferred from these works, the advice given in these books clearly reveals 'what a dominant segment of the population viewed as being proper manners and desirable deportment: the behavioural codes and more importantly, the behavioral ideals' (Wouters 1987: 406-407). The study by Sugitoto (1998) reveals that the norms of apology by American and Japanese literature indicate differences in the ways participants personalizing their apologies as well as differences in private setting and public settings.

Some other studies looking at the ways apology reflects cultural values from emotional and psychological perspectives. Lazare (2005) looks at the relationship of the process of apology and cultural values such as shame, humility or sincerity. He argues that apology could communicate submissive feelings and humility in some cultures but could merely communicate sincerity in some other cultures. However, it is a behaviour that requires of both parties an attitude of honesty, generosity, humility, commitment and courage.

### **2.5.3 Individualism and Collectivism**

Communication is dynamic within each culture, and at the same time, there are systematic similarities and differences across cultures. According to Gudykust and Lee (2003), these similarities and differences can be explained and predicted theoretically using dimensions of cultural variability such as individualism and collectivism.

Hofstede (1980:51) defines individualism and collectivism as follows:

Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his other immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in- groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

Although certainly not the first social scientist to focus explicitly on culture, Hofstede's model was important because it organized cultural differences into overarching patterns, which facilitated comparative research and launched a rapidly expanding body of cultural and cross-cultural research in the ensuing 20 years. It covers five main dimensions: power distance; individualism and collectivism; masculinity; uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. In this thesis, the individualism and collectivism was chosen to be the focus of the analysis for the fact that this dimension reflects the differences of the cultures that this study was examining, namely Chinese and British. This dimension has been applied by other research in communication studies (e.g. Fukushima 2000) which offers comparative



value. Also, due to the scale of this thesis, it was not possible to focus on all the five dimensions mentioned by Hofstede.

Fukushima (2000:118) summarizes the features of collectivism and individualism in terms of the concepts of group/individual and communication patterns as following:

In collectivist cultures, the group is considered to be important and relationships within the group are important; whereas in individualist cultures, more importance is placed on individuals.

- People in collectivist cultures distinguish forms of discourse, i.e., the way of speaking to others, between those who are in-group members and out-group members more than people in individualist cultures;
- People in collectivist cultures pay more attention to context than people in individualist cultures;
- People in collectivist cultures do not say as much or express themselves as explicitly as people in individualist cultures, i.e. people in collectivist cultures express themselves implicitly and indirectly; and
- People in collectivist cultures infer more than people in individualist culture.

Hofstede (1980) claims that the underlying values of individualist and collectivist cultures determine the meanings people give to their lifestyles, interpersonal relationships and psychological well-being. Therefore, it is useful to consider this dimension of culture in terms of the differences between British and Chinese subjects in this study. There are systematic variations in communication that can be explained by these two notions. However, it is important to note that individualism-collectivism is manifested in different ways in different cultures.

Hofstede (1980) was aware of the limitations of his research. First, he emphasized that his country-level analysis of individualism could not explain individual behaviour, which he regarded as a theoretically distinct problem. Second, his results might not be stable but rather shaped by the economic and historical circumstances of the 1970s, when he collected his data. Therefore, cultural shift might not be demonstrated in his data. According to Hofstede's (1991:53) list of individualism index values (IDV), it seems that

Britain can be classified as an individualist society. The UK scores 89 for individualism. This is high and therefore points to that fact that British culture values individuality. On the other hand, Chinese culture has been shown to be less individualistic and more collectivistic, scored 20 (Hui, 1988; Chan 1994; Oyserman, Coon & Kemmelmeier 2002).

#### **2.5.4 Chinese Values and Culture**

In this section, some Chinese communication features that are influenced by collectivism cultural values will be discussed. They are: implicit communication, the 'inside/outside' distinction, and the importance of 'face-work'.

The Chinese phrase *han xu* refers to a mode of communication (both verbal and nonverbal) that is contained, reserved, implicit, and indirect. This concept is similar to the discussion on indirect and direct speech acts. *Han xu* is considered a social rule in Chinese culture (Yu and Gu 1990). That is, *han xu* defines appropriate communication in various social and relational contexts. To be *han xu*, one does not spell out everything, but leaves the 'unspoken' to the listeners. The practice of *han xu*, "implicit communication", in Chinese communication is compatible with the conceptualization of self in a relational context. An implicit style of communication enables one to negotiate meanings with others in interpersonal relationships, and to help maintain existing relationships among individuals without destroying group harmony.

The notion of *zi ji ren* ("insiders") and *wai ren* ("outsiders") are significant in Chinese culture, and the Chinese make clear distinctions between the two. In the family unit, insiders include members of the family and relatives. Friends and others with whom one has established a special relationship are considered insiders in a social circle. The



distinction between an outsider and an insider not only places people in different relational circles, but also prescribes specific rules of interaction in communication.

The insider effect suggests that the type of relationship is a critical dimension in the Chinese communication processes. The nature of a relationship determines what is communicated and how information should be communicated. A Chinese cultural expectation is that insiders and outsiders should not be treated in the same way, because insiders share a sense of unity and interdependence (Wierzbicka 1996). The Chinese expression, *bu yao jian wai*, “do not treat yourself as a stranger”, implies underlying assumptions and expectations associated with the notion of a stranger. To illustrate, communication with insiders can be very personal, but with outsiders, it can be very impersonal. Compared to North Americans, Chinese are more likely to pursue a conflict with a stranger than with a friend (Leung 1988). Chinese view lying to strangers as significantly less wrong than do their Canadian counterparts (McLeod and Carman 1987). In close relationships in China, especially family relationships, imperative requests are more appropriate; but interrogative requests are expected to be used with others (Wierzbicka 1996). Moreover, Chinese are more likely to express feelings and emotions with family members than with non-family members (Chu and Ju 1993) and with close friends than with acquaintances or strangers (Schneider 1985). This is linked with the discussion of individualism and collectivism as mentioned previously.

As already mentioned previously, *mian zi* concerns the projection of and claims to public image (Ting-Toomey 1988). Similar concept is defined by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). Thus face-work management, that is understanding others’ needs and expectations with regard to face, and knowing how to negotiate face with others, is not only essential to maintaining existing role relationships and preserving interpersonal harmony, but is also an integral part of the development of the Chinese self. Concern for face has significant

consequences in many aspects of Chinese speaking practices (e.g. Bond and Lee 1981; Wierzbicka 1996). The dimension of collectivist and individualist cultures forms an important aspect of the theoretical basis for this study.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, various theories and studies related to apologies in cross-cultural contexts have been reviewed. These provide the theoretical basis for this study as well as useful tools for interpreting the findings in this study. The next chapter focuses on the methodology of the current study.



## **Chapter 3      Research Methods**

### **3.1    *Introduction***

The research methods and procedures of this study are discussed and explained in detail in this chapter. The study employs four approaches to data collection: ethnography, corpus linguistics, pragmatics/speech act studies and interactional sociolinguistics. Since each data collection method has its own merits and drawbacks, it is argued that a combination of different approaches can ensure the validity (i.e. reflection of the real world situation) and reliability (i.e. reproducibility by other researchers) of a study (Wolfson, Marmor & Jones 1989; Kasper & Dahl 1991).

Section 3.2 reviews this study's aims and research questions. In 3.3, some key methodological issues involved in the field of cross-cultural studies are explored and approaches to these issues in the current study are also addressed. This is followed in 3.4 by an introduction to the research design of this study, explaining aspects of the research design which contribute to answering the questions raised and achieving the research purposes. In Section 3.5, the rationale and changes made in the pilot study are addressed; while detailed procedures of data collection are introduced in 3.6. Data analysis of each data set is examined in the final section, 3.7.

### **3.2    *Aims and Research Questions***

This study examines how native Mandarin Chinese and British English speakers as well as non-native speakers of these two languages produce and evaluate apology strategies. It is primarily a cross-cultural pragmatics study, that is, a "study of communicative practices in different speech communities which pursues overlapping and partly identical research goals as the social sciences and the specializations within them" (Kasper & Rose,

2002:73). It shares with other studies of apologies a focus on examining the similarities and differences in apology strategy use and the effects of contextual factors. It also attempts to explore the interaction between native and non-native speakers in given apology situations.

What makes this study different from most work in speech act research is its *explanatory* objective. Most previous studies have aimed to describe the ways native and/or non-native speakers produce apology strategies or assess contextual factors in a given situation. In other words, the pragmatics of apology has been explored mainly from the perspective of *who* says *what* to *whom* and *when*, but not *why*. Therefore, the current study attempts to progress beyond description to explanation by identifying the underlying cultural values and assumptions that inform perceptions of contextual factors which in turn inform apology behaviour.

The research questions were as follows:

1. How do the following four groups of participants produce and evaluate apology strategies?
  - Native Mandarin Chinese speakers
  - Native British English speakers
  - Advanced Chinese ESL learners in the UK
  - Advanced British CSL learners in China
2. How do cultural values and assumptions impact on participants' production and evaluation of apology strategies?

The above research questions determine the choice of a different methodological approach. Since the research goals of cross-cultural pragmatics overlap with those of some other types of social science research, its methods consequently cover a various range of approaches that are also widely used in other fields. Nevertheless, there are some



fundamental methodological principles that are specific to the underlying design of the current study. These methodological issues will now be discussed in detail.

**3.3 Methodological Issues**

**3.3.1 Validity and Reliability in Cross-cultural Research**

Validity and reliability are two terms of central importance to research. This section considers the concepts of validity and reliability of research in general, and in cross-cultural research in particular. This is followed by a discussion of the methods and procedures applied in this study in order to ensure validity and reliability. Nunan (1992:17) defines these two concepts as follows:

Reliability refers to the consistency of the results obtained from a piece of research. Validity, on the other hand, has to do with the extent to which a piece of research actually investigates what the researcher purports to investigate.

Nunan (1992) also divides reliability and validity each into two sub-categories: internal and external. The key questions one needs to ask in relation to each sub-category are summarized in Table 3.1.

Type	Key question
Internal reliability	Would an independent researcher, on reanalyzing the data, come to the same conclusion?
External reliability	Would an independent researcher, on replicating the study, come to the same conclusion?
Internal validity	Is the research design such that we can confidently claim that the outcomes are a result of the experimental treatment?
External validity	Is the research design such that we can generalize beyond the subjects under investigation to a wider population?

**Table 3.1 Questions for establishing the reliability and validity of a study. (Source: Nunan 1992:17)**

In terms of the inter-relationship between the reliability and validity of research, Oppenheim (1992:145) claims that adequate reliability is a precondition to validity. Thus, the degree of reliability (consistency) sets limits on the degree of validity possible: validity cannot rise above a certain point if a measure is unreliable to some degree. On the other hand, if we find that a measure has excellent validity, then it must also be reliable. By contrast, Elton (1995) argues that there is no contest between reliability and validity: validity is far more important. Nevertheless, I believe good research demands a balance of validity and reliability.

To ensure the validity and reliability in a cross-cultural study like the current one, several forms of equivalence must be considered. In the context of cross-cultural studies, equivalence is also known as “cross-cultural comparability”. According to Lonner (1979:27), “if comparisons are to be legitimately made across cultural boundaries, it is first necessary to establish equivalent bases upon which to make comparison”. Gudykunst (2000b) listed five types of equivalence which are essential for explaining results in cross-cultural studies. They are:

1. functional equivalence;
2. conceptual equivalence;
3. linguistic equivalence;
4. metric equivalence
5. sample equivalence.

**Functional equivalence** is a fundamental concept for cross-cultural research. Berry (1969:122) explains:

Functional equivalence of behaviour exists when the behaviour in question has developed in response to a problem shared by two or more societal/cultural groups, even though the behaviour in one society does not appear to be related to its counterpart in another society. These functional equivalences must pre-exist as naturally occurring phenomena; they are discovered and cannot be created or manipulated.



Apologies in this study are defined based on their fundamental functions (see Chapter 2). Hence, although linguistic *forms* are bound to be different in Chinese and English, it is the *function* of apologies that provides the main focus for comparison in this study. In addition, the apology situations used here were assessed by the participants in terms of their authenticity and naturalism (also see 3.4.3).

**Conceptual equivalence** refers to the meaning of concepts to individuals within the cognitive system of the members of the culture(s) being examined (Sear, 1961). Although this equivalence is important, it raises the dilemma of choosing an *emic* or *etic* approach to culture and behaviour. The main distinction between these two approaches is that the former examines only one culture (i.e. is culture-specific), while the latter examines many cultures based on a so-called 'universal structure' (i.e. is universal). If one adopts an emic approach, studying just one culture in its own independent terms, then no cross-cultural comparison is feasible. On the other hand, the etic assumption of universal criteria is an objectivist one, which disregards the possibility that people from different cultural backgrounds might evaluate the same variables differently. The current cross-cultural study does not take the universal significance of variables for granted in this way. Instead, conceptual equivalence is approached following a three-stage process suggested by Triandis *et al* (1973). First, Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness framework and the existing apology coding manual in CCSARP (see Chapter 2) were adopted. Though both appear to some extent to be universal, they are largely based on western languages. Second, the Chinese data was coded according to this framework and coding manual, with a view to their possible limitations. Finally, the Chinese data was used to challenge these existing etic models.

**Linguistic equivalence** is another key issue. In this study, translation was involved, so if linguistic equivalence was not ensured at each stage of the research process, the data would

not be equivalent. Back translation was therefore used in this study. Back translation is the process of translating a document that has already been translated into a foreign language back to the original language - preferably by an independent translator. Several bilingual speakers of Mandarin Chinese and English were consulted and involved in the translation process. Back translation can improve the reliability and validity of research in different languages by requiring that the quality of a translation is verified by comparison of original and back translated documents. To avoid any influence of perceived social status or prestige on this comparison, alphabetical letters were substituted for personal names in the evaluation documents.

**Metric equivalence** refers to the measurement of the study is not biased due to particular cultural influence. For example, some cross-cultural studies (Vijver & Leung 1997) have indicated that Chinese participants tended to avoid extreme options and preferred middle options while completing evaluation questionnaires. Thus in this study, the evaluative questionnaire was designed with 6 points in order to enhance the metric equivalence.

**Sample equivalence** is important to reduce the alternative explanations for cross-cultural differences due to the differences between the demographic characteristics of the participants. For example, the numerous differences between urban Britain and rural China caused by different levels of economic development might make the interpretation of cross-cultural differences in apology behaviour very difficult. Thus in this study, university students from urban setting in UK and China were compared and it was assumed that their age, educational background are similar across cultures.



### 3.3.2 The Effect of Video Data

The role play performance of the participants was video recorded in this study. Using a video recorder allowed the researcher to examine both verbal and non-verbal aspects of apology behaviour, equally important for understanding the differences between the two cultural groups. Naturally occurring apologies cannot easily be collected due to time constraints in the nature of speech acts, since one cannot predict when and where an apology might occur. In addition, naturally occurring apologies cannot be compared systematically across two different cultures. This is due to the fact that too many potential variables are normally involved in naturally occurring apologies, making it difficult to interpret the findings.

According to Labov (1972a, b), only unconscious unreflective everyday speech will give natural and unadulterated data. In other words, the act of observing speech makes it unnatural. This is what he referred to as the *observer's paradox*, arguing that "our goal is to observe the way people use language when they are not being observed" (1972a: 61). Since sociolinguistic field work cannot, in general, be undertaken without the presence of the researcher and/or the use of his/her recording equipment (Cheshire, 1982; Milroy, 1987), it is unreasonable to assume the participants are unconscious of observation (Wolfson, 1976). Clandestine recordings are suggested by Coats (1998) but are criticized on ethical grounds. Some researchers (e.g. Cameron, 1993) have stressed that the participants should be informed, either before or after the fieldwork, about the reasons behind the researcher's presence (see also 3.3.3 below).

With concern for these issues in mind, the current study aimed to devise methods of data collection as well as procedures to minimize an apparently in-built social science limitation. As discussed previously, a mixture of research methods were used to increase the overall validity and reliability of this research. For example, during the actual role play

data collection process, situations designed as distractors were given to participants at the very beginning. This was based on feedback from the pilot study, where participants claimed that they tended to feel more nervous and were more aware of the existence of the camera at the beginning of the data collection process. Therefore, using a greater density of distractors at the beginning helped the participants familiarize themselves with the procedure and thus become more engaged in the role plays, without impacting on data collection in the subsequent non-distractor situations.

### **3.3.3 Ethical Issues**

An application was made to the Open University Human Participants and Materials Ethical Committee and was approved (see Appendix B). Each participant was required to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix C) to participate in the research. All the data and relevant information from the research was treated as strictly confidential and for research purposes only.

## **3.4 Research Design**

### **3.4.1 Overall Design**

In order to answer the proposed research questions, it was necessary to identify the different ways in which native English speakers and native Chinese speakers perform the act of apology, as well as the different situations which serve to trigger them to do so. It was also a purpose of the research to explore possible sources of effective communication or conflict between the two cultural groups within the context of pragmatics. To accomplish these aims, a combination of methods from various research approaches was utilized in this study. As Kasper & Dahl (1991:232) argue:



One method can be employed to collect the primary source of data, with data collected by means of another method having the subsidiary function of developing the instrument for the primary data collection or helping with the interpretation of the primary data. Alternatively, two or more data types may have equivalent status in the study, yielding complementary information on the research question at hand. This procedure can also be used for explicit comparison of different data collection techniques.

In the current study, triangulation was implemented throughout the overall design and research procedure. Triangulation is a methodological justification for bringing different kinds of methods together in order to enhance the validity of findings. It can be between different kind of qualitative methods, or between different kinds of quantitative methods, as well as between a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. The term 'mixed method' is also used to describe different types of combinations of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The findings from one type of study can be checked against the findings derived from another. It is important to note that 'mixed method' refers not only to combined quantitative and qualitative data collection, but also to its analysis. Therefore, the collection and analysis of the data in this study were carried out both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The benefits of combining methods from various research approaches have been emphasized by many researchers in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics (e.g. Cohen, 1996; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). They indicate that contrastive pragmatics methods can potentially identify cross-cultural and cross-linguistic pragmatic differences and similarities, but are unable to identify instances of pragmatic transfer; whereas interlanguage pragmatics has the potential to identify learner-specific behaviour, including pragmatic transfer. However, to reach conclusions about pragmatic communication failure, interlanguage production data must be supplemented by other measures, such as rating of responses and interviews (Cohen, 1996). According to a review by Kasper and Dahl (1991), mixed methods have already been adopted by many researchers:

<u>Researcher</u>	<u>Speech acts examined</u>	<u>Speakers examined</u>	<u>Methods used</u>
<b><i>Combined methods of production data collection</i></b>			
Intachakra, 2001	Requests, apologies and compliments	British native and Thai native	Observation DCT
<b><i>Combined methods of pragmatic comprehension data collection</i></b>			
Ervin-Tripp, 1987	Requests	French learners and English learners	Narrative Observation
Rintell, 1984	Emotion	English learners	Multiple choices 9-point scale
<b><i>Combined production and pragmatic comprehension data collection</i></b>			
Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986	Thanking	English learners	DCT Informal interview
House, 1988	Apologies	German learners and English learners	DCT 3-point scale
Bergman & Kasper, 1991	Apologies	Thai English learners	DCT 5-point scale
Olshtain, 1983	Apologies	English and Russian learners of Hebrew	Closed role play Questionnaires
Garcia, 1989	Apologies	Spanish Learners and American English native speakers	Open role play Interviews
Takahashi & DuFon, 1989	Requests	Japanese English learners	Open role play Interviews
Fraser, Rintell & Walters, 1980	Requests and apologies	Spanish English learners and native English	Closed role play 5-point scale
Rintell, 1981	Requests and suggestions	Spanish English learners	Closed role play 5-point scale
Xiang, 2001	Apologies	Chinese learners and native British English speakers	DCT 5-point scale Interviews

**Table 3.2 A summary of mixed methods used in existing cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics**

As shown in Table 3.2, there are three main approaches to combining different data collection methods:

- 1) combine different types of production data;
- 2) combine different types of pragmatic comprehension data;
- 3) combine the production data with the pragmatic comprehension data.

It is clear that different approaches are used to answer different research questions and serve different research orientations.

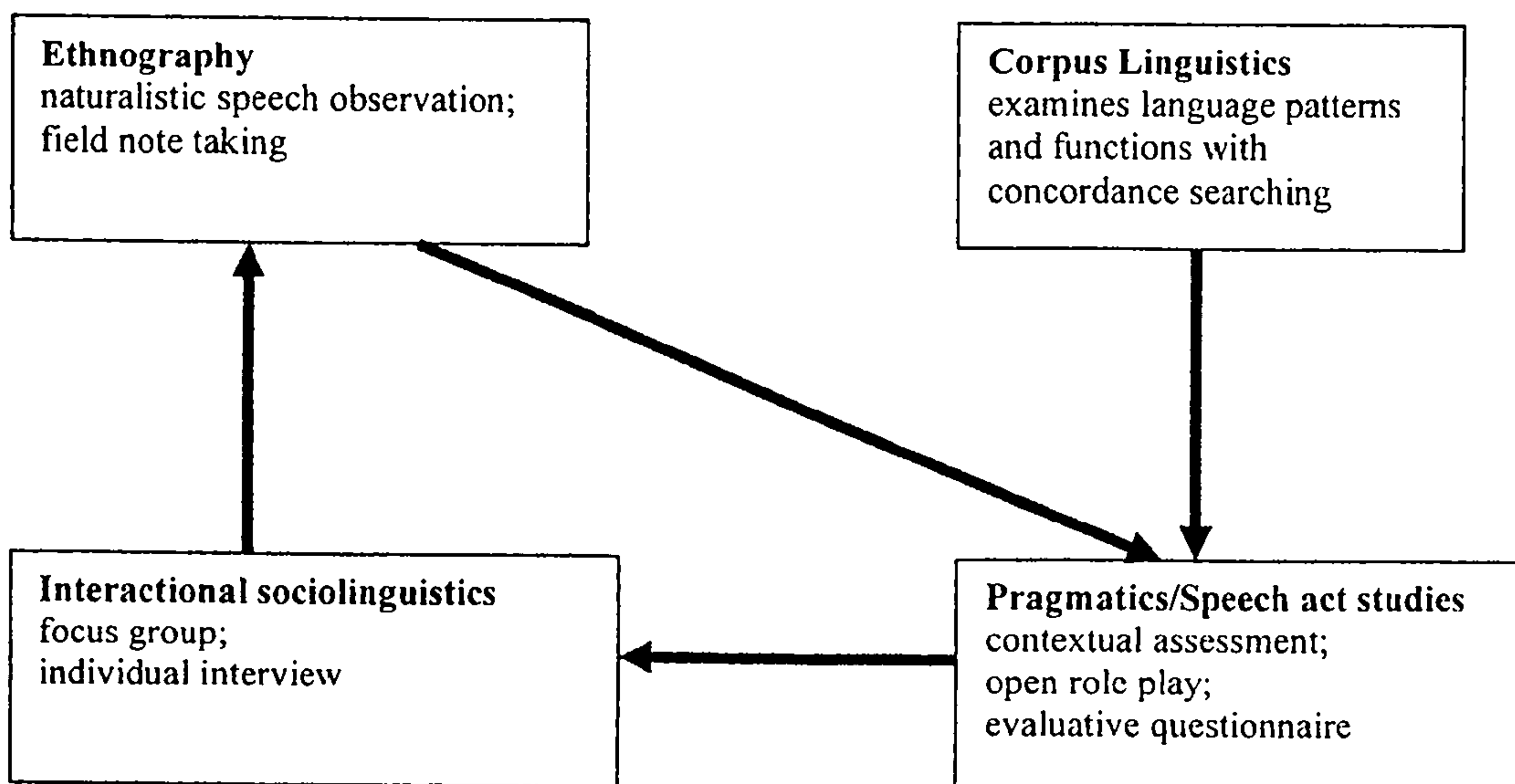


On the other hand, if only one type of data is used, it is possible that the results are biased by the methods. For instance, it has been found that Asian participants may not use the response end-points (e.g. strongly agree or strongly disagree) in questionnaires (Chen et al, 1995).

Cohen (1996) also points out the importance of combining different research methods in a certain order in order to achieve a better understanding of the field. The following research cycle suggested is by Cohen (ibid: 39):

... the research cycle of ethnography, role play research, written completion tests and acceptability checks was presented. It was indicated that each of these data collection techniques has its own merits, but that it is the use of more than one that provides us with important triangulation. It was suggested that in addition to considering the above-mentioned techniques which are useful for the description of speech act behaviour within a group, the researcher of speech act behaviour also needs to better understand the choice made by individuals and that here is where verbal reports can be most valuable.

The following figure demonstrates the integrated research cycle of the present study:



**Figure 3.1 The research cycle and inter-relationship of approaches used in this study**

As shown in Figure 3.1, four theoretical frameworks (including both quantitative and qualitative approaches) informed the design of the current study at different stages. Methods from pragmatics/speech act studies allowed the researcher to collect both the main quantitative and qualitative data for this study. Ethnography and Corpus Linguistics helped to provide background information on context and participants, acted as a source of hypotheses and aided apology situation construction. Contextual assessment and evaluative questionnaires were efficient at getting to the 'structural' features of the apology behaviour and allowed the researcher to establish relationships among variables. Finally, Interactional Sociolinguistics was used to help explain the factors underlying the broad relationships that are established and took subjects' perspectives as the point of departure through individual and group interviews.

After considering the research questions, the characteristics of the population and speech acts under observation, and the most commonly used methods in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics (see Chapter 2), a mixed design consisting of a series of sequential steps was selected for this study.

### **3.4.2 Stage One: The Generation of Apology Situations**

In the study, an ethnographical approach and a corpus linguistics approach were used in order to picture and describe ways in which native British English and Chinese speakers conceptualize apologies. In this way, a range of comparable apology situations could be identified and applied to elicit apology strategies of British and Chinese participants.

As an extension of linguistic anthropology, ethnography of communication shares with pragmatics its interest in the cultural meaning of interaction within a speech community or more narrowly defined social group. The main data collection methods in ethnographic



research include participant observation, interviews and field note taking, etc. One of the features of ethnographic research is that the data comes from 'real world' contexts, rather than being produced under experimental conditions created by the researcher. Usually, ethnographies of communication require audio- or video-taped interactions, as taking field notes from memory is not sufficient to generate accurate and adequate details of communicative interaction. However, one of the problems of the above two approaches is that one does not have much control over the naturalistic data arising from the phenomena under study, nor over the socio-cultural variables which may affect subjects' choices of apology strategies. It is hence difficult to compare data collected from subjects of different cultural backgrounds by these approaches, even if the quantity of data is sufficient. A further problem is the effect of researchers' own identities in ethnography studies. As Saville-Troike (1989:117) states, the decision as to which procedure should be used is very much dependent upon the relationship between the ethnographer and the speech community under study, plus the type of data to be collected. Other significant factors include the gender, age, social class, status and cultural background of the researcher, and interaction between the researcher and the subjects (Holmes, 1988; Labov, 1972a).

During the initial stage of development of the apology data elicitation procedure for this study, a list of situations were collected where apologies occurred naturally in a wide range of contexts in the UK and Mainland China. This was done mainly through naturally occurring speech observation with field-note taking; live shows or reality shows in the media (see Appendix D for the field work record form).

In addition, Corpus linguistics provides a useful tool for exploring the interface of grammar and pragmatics. A spoken corpus provides a sample of naturalistic speech rather than speech elicited under artificial conditions. Key words such as 'sorry', 'apologize' were used in corpus search in order to identify the context and other linguistic features

associated with these words. The findings from the corpus are therefore more likely to reflect language as it is spoken in "real life", since the data is less likely to be subject to production monitoring by the speaker (e.g. of regional variation). The British National Corpus and Lancaster Chinese Corpus were used as ways to explore apology situations that happen in British and Chinese contexts. When this study was undertaken, some regular situations in which people apologize, such as when bumping into someone on the street, were very difficult to act out naturally in role plays. Therefore, corpus data offers an additional source of apology situations. This approach also offers a general overview of the linguistic structures of apologies in these two languages. However, a corpus linguistic approach has not been used to a great extent in pragmatics studies because not all the corpora provide explicit information on social contexts such as age, gender, and surroundings.

As a result, the randomly collected naturalistic data as well as corpus data in this study contributed to a more authentic construction of the elicitation design, but did not constitute part of the raw data. Instead, they were classified by offence type using Holmes' (1989) situation categories as an initial guide, but adapting these to accommodate the data. These were analyzed quantitatively and compared. Although many more incidents occurred during field work in the UK, a lot were overlapping in terms of the offence type. Twenty situations were identified from the data.

### **3.4.3 Stage Two: Selection of Comparable Apology Situations**

One of the important methodological considerations of this study was to maintain the functional equivalence of the apology situations across Chinese and British cultures. In order to achieve construct validity, it is important to know how the participants construe the situations in the research. Eienhart and Howe (1992:648) states that:



In qualitative/ethnographic research construct validity must demonstrate that the categories that the researchers are using are meaningful to the participants themselves i.e. that they reflect the way in which the participants actually experience and construe the situation in the research: that they see the situation through the actors' eyes.

It is possible that some of the situations identified via observation and corpus analysis might have been alien to Chinese culture or vice versa, or unlikely to produce an apology in both cultures. In order to avoid this, a pre-study contextual assessment questionnaire (Appendix E) was distributed to 200 university students (100 native speakers of British English and 100 native Mandarin Chinese respectively) in both the UK and China. The students were asked to assess these twenty situations in terms of how likely they were to happen in their own cultural background, as well as rating the external contextual factors (social power and social distance) and internal contextual factors (severity of offence and necessity to apologize) affecting each interaction. Another purpose of using this questionnaire was to ensure that construction of contextual variables in the situations was not judged subjectively by the researcher but rather based on the native speakers' point of view.

The results of the assessment questionnaires were analyzed in both cultural groups. Those situations that were rated unlikely to happen in either culture were thus deleted accordingly. The mean figures of the participants' assessment of the contextual values were also compared and formed a basis for the construct of the variables for the final study. Based on the above analysis, twelve apology situations were finally selected from the previous twenty situations and used in the main study.

They are as follows:

#### Role-play Situations (RSs)

- 1 Your mobile phone rings in a session with your personal tutor.
- 2 You got confused about the tutorial time and didn't show up.

- 3 You, the senior resident, have a birthday party all night long in your flat and disturb your flatmate preparing for her exam.
- 4 You are seriously late for a job interview with the department manager.
- 5 You mistake a stranger for a friend on the street.
- 6 You forget to return a book on time to a professor
- 7 You accidentally give less money to the shop assistant for your shopping.
- 8 You promise to take your little cousin to a movie, but you can't go because of work.
- 9 You promise a friend to bring a DVD when visiting, but forget.
- 10 You spill hot soup on the waitress.
- 11 You borrow a mobile from a good friend to make a call but drop it on the floor and break it.
- 12 You provide the wrong deadline for handing in an essay to a new school mate

These twelve situations contain three contextual variables: social status, social distance and severity of offence (see also Chapter 2). The following table demonstrates the design of the situations and variables:

RSs	Power	Distance	Severity of the Offence
1	S<H	close	low
2	S<H	close	high
3	S>H	close	high
4	S<H	far	high
5	S=H	far	low
6	S<H	far	low
7	S=H	far	low
8	S>H	close	low
9	S=H	close	low
10	S>H	far	high
11	S=H	close	high
12	S=H	far	high

**Table 3.3 The design of the apology situations (S= Speaker; H=Hearer)**

As can be seen from Table 3.3, the situations in the role play were designed in order to elicit the speech act in question for all the possible combinations of the social variables: social power, social distance and severity of offence.



### 3.4.4 Stage Three: Using Open Role Play

Elicitation instruments commonly used in speech act studies were employed to overcome the limitations of naturalistic data discussed in 3.4.1. In this study, open role plays (see situation cards in Appendix F) were used with a follow-up evaluation questionnaire. Both were pilot-tested prior to the main study. Details of the rationale for and changes made in the pilot study are discussed in section 3.5.

In role plays, the participants are asked to take a particular role requiring the performance of a speech act. There are two types of role plays: open role plays and closed role plays. In the former, the subject is given an opportunity to interact freely with the interlocutor; while in the latter, the subject is given very few or no opportunities to interact with the interlocutor. The following is an example of open role play taken from Reiter's (2000:63) study of requests and apologies among British and Uruguayan participants:

Informant A:

You ask a neighbour you do not know very well to help you move some things out of your flat with his/her car since you haven't got a car and you haven't got anyone else to ask since everyone you know appears to be on holiday and you have no money either to hire someone who can help or to arrange transport. You see your neighbour on the street. What do you say to him/her?

Informant B:

You're on the street. A neighbour you do not know very well comes to talk to you. Respond to him/her.

On the other hand, in a closed role play, the participants would be given a situation and asked to respond to the situation verbally. For example:

You have borrowed your friend's notes and because of the rain yesterday, some of the notes have been wet and damaged. What would you say when you want to return the notes?

Role plays are regarded as simulating more authentic situations (e.g. Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985; Kasper & Duhl, 1991; Yamashita, 1996) and have been used as data

elicitation tools in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics (e.g. Beebe & Cummings 1996; Houck & Gass, 1996; Scarcella, 1979; Tanaka, 1988; Turnbull, 1997; Reiter, 2000). Rintell & Mitchell (1989:251) discuss the advantages and the disadvantages of this method:

The advantages of this method are that the subjects have the opportunity to say what and as much as they would like to say<sup>1</sup>, and their spoken language is thought to be a good indication of their "natural" way of speaking. A possible disadvantage is that since the subjects are role playing and not naturalistically engaged in the interaction under investigation, we do not know to what extent the subjects' responses are representative of what the subject would say if he or she encountered the situation in real life. Another is that the subject might...feel as if he or she were taking a test, and the responses might be accommodated accordingly.

Both closed and open role plays have the advantage of providing data in an oral form rather than a written form. However, open role plays are the closest to authentic discourse and more desirable than closed role plays (Houck & Gass, 1996; Yuan, 2001). According to Sasaki (1998), open role plays produce more conversational turns and take more time to complete than closed role plays. While the former allow the researcher to conduct close analysis of long interaction sequences of comparable data, the latter do not allow a free range of answers, and will suffer from the possibility of non-symmetry with naturally occurring data (Houck & Gass, 1996).

Based on their study on refusals, Houck & Gass (1996:52) point out that "role play data differs from other data on refusals both quantitatively and qualitatively". They found the following differences between role play and using a written or tape-recorded elicitation instrument:

1. a real face-to-face encounter results in a dynamic interaction: it is two different things to formulate a refusal on paper and to deliver that refusal to a person who will response to it.
2. the role plays resulted in what were often lengthy interactions in which the participants negotiated their way to a resolution. During this time, speakers hemmed and hawed, cut each other off, requested clarification, self corrected,

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<sup>1</sup> This is only the case in open role play but not closed role play.



modified and elaborated their positions, and generally became involved in negotiating semantic, pragmatic, and social meaning.

Therefore, role plays are recommended for solving the 'context' dilemma (Reiter 2000:75).

This refers to the need to collect speech acts in their full discourse context, which can only be gathered in 'real' conversation:

What is needed is a way of allowing the informants involved to carry out complete interactions where they have maximum control over their conversational exchange and the variables can be manipulated by the researcher. This can be achieved by means of a role play where the speech acts under study can be embedded in a more 'natural' discourse context. (Reiter, 2000:75)

In order to provide this 'natural' discourse context, it is important for this study to leave room for negotiation, as in open role plays instead of closed role plays. The participants were asked to role play with a native speaker in either their first language or target language. Reiter (2000:75) argues that it is important the participants are not informed of the communicative goal:

The addressee knows that some interaction will take place but does not know the speaker's communicative goal in advance. Therefore the interaction between the informants is 'real' in the context of the role play since neither the conversational outcomes nor how the outcomes are to be reached are prescribed. Hence, they need to be negotiated. ... The speech acts are elicited in contextualised natural situations where there is an element of the unpredictable.

However, it would not be authentic if the participants were required to take on roles that they have never experienced in real life situations. Therefore, the participants were not asked to take on other roles apart from being themselves, and were asked to say what they thought they would say in real life situations. Two university students who were majoring in drama participated in this research as role play assistants. One was a native British English speaker and the other was a native Chinese speaker. Both were females to minimize the possible influence of gender. Their participation served an important role in terms of ensuring the validity and reliability of the role play data collection. It was the role

play assistants who were required to act out different roles and they helped participants engage in the role play with their drama expertise. The aim was to create as natural a setting as possible and the acting skills of the role play assistants and the use of props helped facilitate this.

Since apology is a negotiable speech act performed between at least two participants, what participants react to will be largely determined by the responses of the role play assistants. It might seem to be ideal to ensure consistency between the responses of two role play assistants. However, it would be neither feasible nor natural to ask role play assistants to act in exactly the same way on each occasion or respond in the same way regardless of different participants' input. Discussions with each role play assistant were held, to consider construction of contextual variables in this study and their insights and understanding of each situation. Finally, it was agreed among the researcher and the role play assistants who would initiate the conversation in each situation and what would be said, or what the initial response would be, during the role play. A detailed instruction was drafted and given to each assistant in their first language in order to provide clearer guidelines. Distractors were also designed so that the participants would not feel uncomfortable or stressed at having to apologize all the time.

Five design considerations for role plays suggested by Husdon, Detmer & Brown (1995:59) were also taken into account while establishing role play situations in the current study. They are:

1. A person in addition to the researcher should be used to avoid the overlap of researcher and role play roles.
2. A situation should not place too much burden in terms of conceptualisation and actualisation.
3. Action should be kept to a minimum and should not involve drama to a large extent.
4. Action scenarios at the expense of scenarios requiring language should be avoided.
5. Props may be helpful.



### **3.4.5 Stage Four: Using Evaluation Questionnaires**

As already mentioned in 3.4.4, a follow-up evaluative questionnaire (see Appendix G) was given to all the participants to complete immediately after the role play. The questionnaire contained open-ended questions and six-point Likert Scale questions. In the first part of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to comment on their view of the role play situation in terms of authenticity, setting and procedure. Then in the second part, they were asked to assess the contextual variables of the situations. A six-point scale was used to provide more discrimination than a three-point scale, while avoiding the tendency of choosing the middle options and confusion created by having too many options.

### **3.4.6 Stage Five: Recruitment of Participants**

To select a sample of participants for this study, a questionnaire eliciting background information was filled in by university students in the UK and Mainland China. The questionnaire was drafted in both English and Chinese (see Appendix H) and was distributed to students by lecturers working in three major universities in the UK and China. Four groups of similar ages ranging from 18 to 22 years old were chosen: 1. Native British English speakers (NB); 2. Native Mandarin Chinese speakers (NC); 3. British Chinese second language learners (BCSL); 4. Chinese English second language learners (CESL). The intention was to recruit fifteen participants from each group, specialising in various subjects across different faculties, with a balance of genders. The universities where the data collection was conducted were the University of Bristol in the UK, Shanghai International University in China, and Beijing University in China. These three universities are among the top ranking universities in the UK and China and were selected in an attempt to control as much as possible any socio-economic status differences between students. On the other hand, since these were prestigious universities, it was very often the

case that the students studying there came from different regions throughout the country concerned. Thus, these groups tended to be quite diverse.

Although the key information the researcher sought from the native speaker and language learner groups was different, the same format was used in order to maintain comparability and consistency of the data gathered across the four groups. For the native British English and Mandarin Chinese speakers, it was important to establish family backgrounds, and whether the participants had had much contact with other languages and cultures. All the native British participants were native British English speakers, born and educated in England. Both of their parents were born in the UK and were native British English speakers.

As for the language learners, information on length of stay in the target language country and language proficiency in the target language was essential. The average duration of stay in the target language country for both Chinese and British students was seven months. Only students with higher-intermediate Chinese or English proficiency were selected, because participants were expected to interact with a native speaker in the target language, and the researcher intended to separate linguistic from pragmatic competence in the realization of the speech act. Most of the Chinese students who studied in the UK had taken the IELTS test, as this is used as a major criterion for entering the UK higher education system. The average score band was 6.7. TOEFL or other university certificates were considered only if the participants did not have IELTS test scores. Most British learners of Chinese had not taken any standard Chinese tests. Their proficiency levels were assessed through consultation with their course teachers and by looking at their results in Chinese exams on their degree course.



### 3.4.7 Stage Six: Focus Group and One-to-one Interviews

Finally, an interactional sociolinguistic approach was also undertaken in this study. Interactional sociolinguistics is an approach which relies much on transcribed discourse. It is very closely related to ethnography of communication because both share a naturalistic data orientation which enables them to obtain contextual information and cultural meanings. Linguistic, paralinguistic and nonverbal forms of expression are all important resources for conversational inference in interactional sociolinguistics. Providing opportunities for the subjects to evaluate and discuss their own or another cultural group's apology strategies is believed to generate deeper insights into the data and ensure the accuracy of the interpretation of the data by the researcher (Ebsworth, 1992).

Semi-structured interviews (see Appendix I for interview questions) were carried out both in the format of one-to-one interviews and in focus groups. The interviews were organized during the two weeks following the role plays, in order to allow the researcher sufficient time to identify areas of questioning arising from participants' performance in the role plays. There were some structured pre-prepared questions for all the participants. The questions focused on exploring participants' perceptions of, and contextual variables relating to, apology. In addition, the interviews also offered opportunities to discuss apology incidences that were not included in the role play situations. In the one-to-one interview, the participants were asked mainly open-ended questions. Further questions were asked based on the responses given by the participants. In the focus group interview, open discussion was encouraged with the researcher took on the role of a facilitator.

Based on the analysis of production data, significant differences were found in terms of choices in apology strategies in power relationships across the cultural groups. Therefore, it was decided to focus on the situations in which most differences occurred. Six out of twelve apology situations were used in the interviews with native participants of Chinese

and English based on power differences ( $S < H$ ,  $S = H$  and  $S > H$ ) as well as severity of offence (a light and a severe situation with in each power relationship). These six situations were RS1 (mobile phone in tutorial), RS2 (didn't turn up for a tutorial), RS5 (mistook stranger for friend), RS9 (forgot DVD), RS10 (spilt soup on waitress) and RS11 (damaged friend's mobile). In each interview, participants were show two performances of each situation by other participants respectively. One clip was performed by a native speaker of their own language and the other by a learner of their language. The participants were asked to comment on whether they considered the apology behaviour to be acceptable, appropriate and effective. The interviews were all audio-recorded. Interviews with the non-native speakers were undertaken in their first language.

A focus group in-depth interview involves a researcher eliciting information from the group to address particular issues. The main feature of the method is that it generates data through group interaction. Therefore, data collected via focus groups tend to have a dynamic and interactive nature compared to those from individual interviews. For the current study, this allows the researcher to identify different views and seek participants' perceptions and underlying cultural values.

The design for focus groups used in this study aimed at encouraging, not inhibiting, an exchange of views and experiences. Two formats were considered for organizing the focus groups. One was dividing participants according to socio-demographic characteristics, which led to four focus groups of native British speakers, native Chinese speakers and language learners of these two target languages. One of the advantages of using this format was that the groups were relatively homogeneous and thus the participants were more comfortable about expressing their views. Another benefit was that language proficiency did not appear to be a problem. The participants were allowed to use their first language to interact with each other. However, data obtained from a homogeneous group could be



relatively bland as the group members were more likely to agree with each other. Another possible format was dividing participants based on their relationship to the research issues. Since the current research aims to find out the cultural assumptions and values underpinning participants' apology behaviour, it would be useful to put two cultural groups together to address the same issue and allow different views and perceptions to emerge from the discussion. This would lead to the formation of two focus groups with a combination of native speakers and language learners of the targeted language in the target country. In other words, there would be a group of native Chinese speakers and British learners of Chinese in China, and another group of native British English speakers and Chinese learners of English in the UK. The heterogeneous group was likely to be livelier, but could be less comfortable as people would tend to disagree with each other, which could potentially inhibit the exchange of views. On the other hand, there was a concern whether language learners would be linguistically gifted enough to be able to discuss various issues freely with native speakers in the target languages.

After all these considerations, it was decided that both formats would be used in the main study, to accommodate the range of participants and achieve the research aims. The following table demonstrates the division of the participants in interviews in the study:

Format used	Total number of participants	Division of the participants
One-to-one interviews:	32	8 Native Chinese participants 8 Native British participants 8 British learners of Chinese 8 Chinese learners of English
Focus groups:	28	Group 1: 4 Native Chinese participants Group 2: 4 Native British participants Group 3: 4 British learners of Chinese Group 4: 4 Chinese learners of English Group 5: 3 Native British + 3 Chinese learners of English Group 6: 3 Native Chinese + 3 British learners of Chinese

**Table 3.4 Format of the interviews**

### 3.5 Pilot Study

All the instruments were pilot-tested. The main objectives of the pilot test were:

1. to ensure language equivalence, such as wording, format, instruction
2. to ensure the validity of the construction of the instruments and variables
3. to test the setting of the situation and avoid possible difficulties involved in the role plays
4. to estimate the time involved in the role plays and group interviews
5. to ensure the participants would have no confusion about what they needed to do

The pilot study was carried out first in the UK during summer 2004, and then in China in winter 2004. The scale of the UK pilot was relatively small, with four native British participants and eight Chinese learners of English in Bristol. However, the pilot study in Bristol was effective and a number of changes were made based on that. These changes included the following:

#### *1. Re-wording: updating and correcting all the relevant documents*

One of the issues with the role play was the wording of the situation cards. Without clear instructions and descriptions of the targeted situations, the participants either misunderstood the situation or got confused about what they were being asked to do. Therefore, some improvements were made to all the relevant documents based on feedback from the participants. Another issue that emerged from the pilot was that, in some situations, the participants were not clear about whether they should initiate the interaction or not. This was further clarified on the description card and re-addressed with the role play assistants.

#### *2. Further defining the role of the assistant*

After the pilot study in UK, it was found necessary to emphasize that the role play assistants ought to maintain consistency in terms of the way they initiate the conversation to different participants in all situations. Due to the negotiated nature of apology, it was



agreed that the role play assistant should then respond spontaneously according to the participants' apology behaviour throughout the process.

### *3. Use of distracting situations*

The distractor situations were designed so that the participants would not feel they were apologizing all the time. One aim was to prevent them discovering the research purposes. Also, as the participants pointed out that they felt less nervous as the role plays progressed, it was decided that the distracting situations should be concentrated at the beginning of the role play process, and then used more sparingly throughout the rest of the role plays.

With these amendments made from the pilot study in the UK, the pilot study in China was carried out successfully. Therefore, the data collected in the pilot study in China was treated as part of the final study.

## **3.6 Research procedures**

The main study was undertaken in Shanghai and Beijing during spring 2005 and then in Bristol during summer 2005. As planned, sixty four university students across four groups participated in the study. Sixteen situations were provided in the open role play. Twelve of these were apology situations and the four others were speech acts (one thanking, one request, one complaint and one compliment) designed as distractor situations. The situations varied according to three variables: status, distance, and severity of offence as listed previously.

The participants were informed that this was a cross-cultural studies looking at ways Chinese and British express themselves in different situations. Both participants and role play assistants each received a card clearly indicating the social power and distance between the participants as well as the severity of the offence. The participants were asked

to imagine themselves in those situations and respond what they think they would say in real life situations. NC and NE participants were interacting with an assistant in their first language, while ESL and CSL were interacting with an assistant in their second language. The participants were video-recorded in dyadic face-to-face conversation lasting approximately 2-3 minutes depending on the nature of the offence. During the video recording session, only the researcher was present. The researcher also took note of any distinctive non-verbal behaviour.

After performing the role plays, the participants were asked to fill in the evaluation questionnaire. It was arranged that the participants would have either an individual or group interview two weeks after the time of the role plays. The interviews were all audio-recorded and carried out in the first language of the participants. The interview was designed to explore participants' perceptions regarding their understanding of and beliefs about their apology behaviour, and any sociocultural assumptions they brought into their apology performance. For native speakers, the interview questions targeted participants' understanding of social norms in their native cultures and their beliefs about their apology behaviour. For language learners, the interview aimed to identify difficulties they encountered in using the target language, how various contextual factors may have affected their apology behaviour, and their perception of pragmatic appropriateness when speaking in the target language. The interview questions used followed the main structure; however, depending on the participants' responses, additional questions were posed to clarify and follow up on the participants' answers.



## 3.7 Data Analysis

### 3.7.1 Coding Scheme

In CCSARP studies, Olshtain and Cohen (1983) define apologizing as a culture-sensitive ‘speech-act set’ of semantic formulae or strategies found to regularly co-occur in apologetic responses (also see Chapter 2). They suggest this apology speech act set encompass the potential range of apology strategies, any of which, i.e., an IFID and/or only an utterance of the type (b) or (c) may count as an apology. The apology speech act set includes five potential strategies:

1. an IFID , e.g.
  - I am sorry;
  - I apologize...;
  - I regret...;
  - Pardon me.
2. an explanation or account of the cause which brought about the violation;
3. an expression of the speaker’s responsibility for the offence;
4. an offer of repair and
5. a promise of forbearance.

However, the coding of apologies in CCSARP seems to be too broad. Some apologizing strategies were not distinguished or defined very clearly. For example, in the CCSARP coding manual, the category ‘Explanation and Account’ refers to “any extended (+/- human) mitigating circumstances offered by the speaker, i.e. *objective* reasons for the violation at hand”. Based on this definition, “There was a traffic jam” and “Something happened” can both be coded as Explanations. However, the two responses clearly differ in specificity and persuasiveness. Hence, while analyzing the data in this study, two sub-categories were added under ‘Explanation and Account’: 1. *Explicit explanation* 2. *Implicit explanation*. Moreover, in Xiang’s (2001) study of apology strategies of Chinese graduate students and ESL learners in the UK, several new sub-categories were established based on the strategies used by the subjects. Analyzing apology strategies at such a specific level of content reveals culture-specific preference. As Suszczynska (1999:1056) argues:

Taking on responsibility will show culture-specific preferences for its sub-categories, and most importantly, different responsibility values will be attached to its different sub-types, which might bring about the need to redefine the concept of the category itself.

For example, under the category 'Taking on responsibility', the study found that Chinese subjects used more strategies which were sub-categorized as "indication of effort to avoid the offence". This sub-category refers to 'downgrade taking on responsibility': the speaker takes the responsibility but at the same time expresses innocence. Some typical examples are as follows: "*I tried my best.*"; "*I have been hurrying all I could*".

Another example is the sub-category 'Switch the topic'. This was coded within 'Distracting from the offence'. A variety of strategies were found to be used by the Chinese subjects, such as:

- |                                           |                                               |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| ➤ Changing to a future task related topic | <i>e.g. What are we going to buy for dad?</i> |
| ➤ Re-directing attention                  | <i>e.g. What's that?</i>                      |
| ➤ Showing concern                         | <i>e.g. Are you tired?</i>                    |
| ➤ Showing appreciation                    | <i>e.g. Thank you for waiting for me.</i>     |
| ➤ Giving a compliment                     | <i>e.g. You look very beautiful today.</i>    |

It seems clear that the apologizing coding manual of CCSARP does not cover various strategies produced by Chinese subjects and therefore needs certain modifications in order to serve as an accurate tool of analysis for Chinese data.

Hence, in the current study, apologies are analyzed based on a combination of the CCSARP coding manual and some new coding categories. The following is a complete list with examples. The new categories are presented in italic characters.

#### **1. Illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDS)**

- **Intensifying** e.g. I am really/so/terribly sorry.
- **Emotional expression** e.g. Oh/ Oh, no.
- **Double intensifier or repetition of intensifying adv.** e.g. I am very very sorry.
- **Please** e.g. Please forgive me.
- **Expressions marked for register** e.g. I do apologize for being so late.
- **Concern for hearer** e.g. I hope I haven't caused you any trouble.



## 2. Taking on responsibility

- **Explicit self-blame** e.g. It's my fault.
- **Implicit self-blame** e.g. *I forgot the time./ I missed the bus./ I should have called you.*
- **Lack of intent** e.g. I didn't mean it.
- **Expression of embarrassment** e.g. I feel most embarrassed that I forgot our date.
- **Justify hearer** e.g. You must be very disappointed.
- **Indication of effort to avoid the offence** e.g. *I tried my best./ I have been hurrying all I could.*
- **Refusal to acknowledge guilt**
  - a. **Denial of responsibility** e.g. It's not my fault.
  - b. **Blame the hearer** e.g. You shouldn't give me the wrong address then.
  - c. **Blame a third party/other factors** e.g. *It's the traffic.*

## 3. Explanation or Account

- **Explanation with specific reasons**
  - a. **State reasons** e.g. The bus didn't come on time.
  - b. **Eliciting sympathy** e.g. You know how my boss is.
- **Explanation without specific reasons** e.g. *Something happened.*

## 4. Offer of repair e.g. I'll buy you the ticket.

## 5. Promise of forbearance e.g. It won't happen again.

## 6. Distracting from the offence (Downgrading)

- **Acting innocently** e.g. Am I late?
- **Future task-oriented remark** e.g. Let's go to the movies.
- **Past task-oriented remark**
  - a. **Statement** e.g. *You should have gone in.*
  - b. **Question form** e.g. *You didn't go in?*
- **Making a suggestion**
  - a. **Statement** e.g. *Maybe we can come tomorrow.*
  - b. **Question form** e.g. *Shall we go in?*
- **Invitation to hearer for suggestion** e.g. *What shall we do now?*
- **Switch the topic**
  - a. **Changing to future task related topic** e.g. *What are we going to buy for dad?*
  - b. **Re-directing attention** e.g. *What's that?*
  - c. **Showing concern** e.g. *Are you tired?*
  - d. **Showing appreciation** e.g. *Thank you for waiting for me.*
  - e. **Giving a compliment** e.g. *You look very beautiful today.*
- **Appeasing** e.g. I will invite you for dinner.

## 7. Reassure e.g. We can still watch it tomorrow.

## 8. Others e.g. I will explain later.

## 9. Non-verbal responses e.g. smiling

### 3.7.2 Analytical Levels

Compared to some other controlled data collection methods (such as closed role play, written Discourse Completion Tests or video Discourse Completion Tests), open role play data provides the most dynamic reflection of the interaction resulting from a real face-to-face encounter. Instead of only achieving one-turn responses from the participants as in other elicitation instruments, multiple-turn exchanges occur during an open role play, and how the conversation reaches its logical end is determined by the speakers. During this

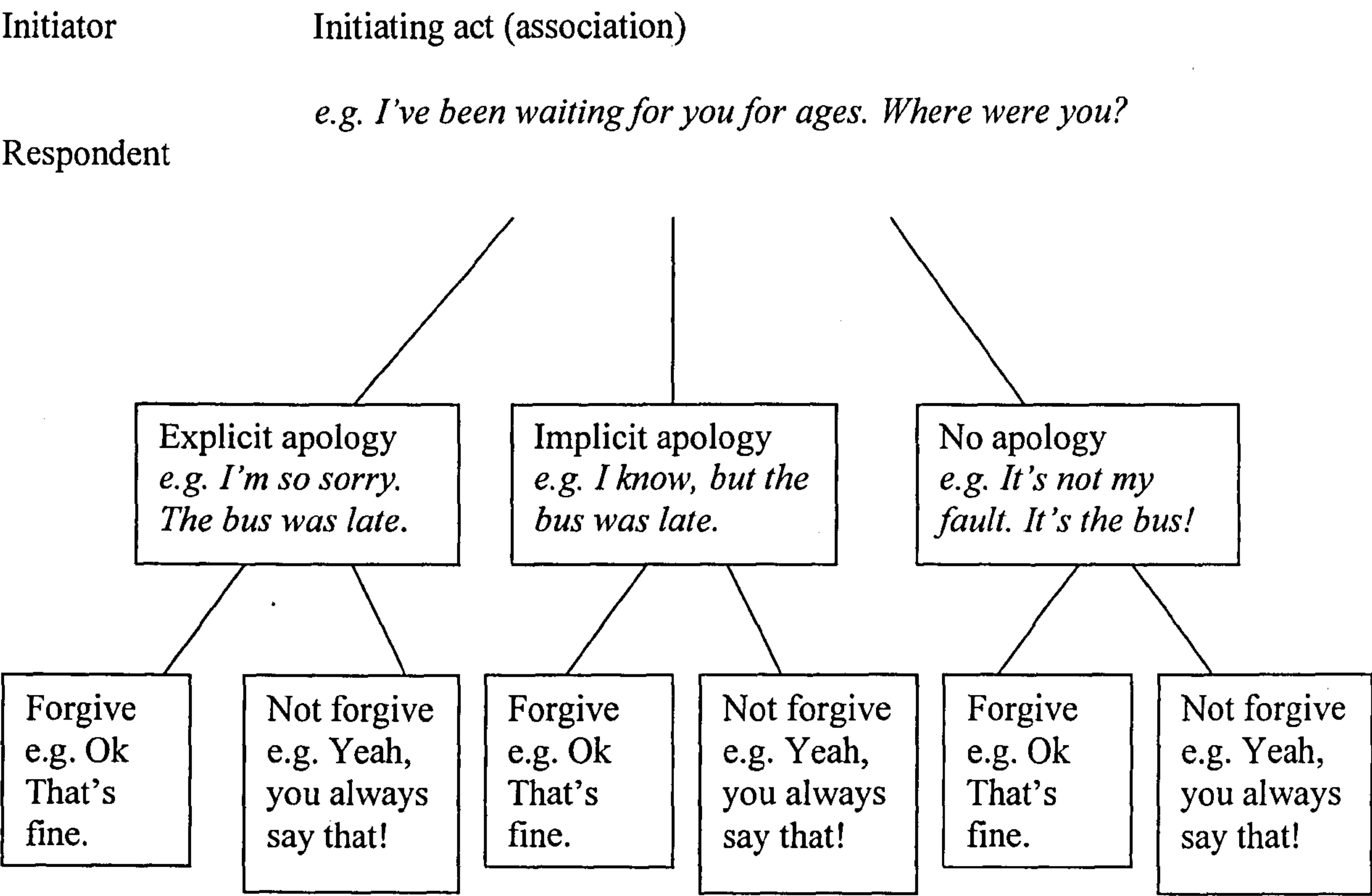
time, speakers interrupt each other, self-correct, ask for clarification, modify and elaborate their positions.

The interactional nature of the open role play calls for several considerations in data analysis. First, it is important to view apologies as coherent speech events rather than isolated single speech acts. According to Hymes (1974:52), a speech event is "activities, or aspects of activities, that are directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech". A speech act occurs within a speech event. The contextual or situational information provided by the speech event enhances the interpretation of the pragmatic meaning of apologies. As suggested in Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) model of 'speech act set', an apology does not have to be a single explicit admission of regret but could be composed of different apology strategies, such as explaining the cause of the offence, and/or expressing feelings and concerns towards the person being offended. The multi-faceted view offered by the 'speech act set' model was found helpful when analysing the data in this study.

Second, the judgement as to when an apology event ends is very much influenced by the hearer's responses. If the function of apologies is to restore the equilibrium between the speaker and hearer, one cannot say an apology is effective or successful if the speaker is not forgiven by the hearer. It is the hearer who decides whether his/her face-need is fulfilled after receiving an apology. If the hearer is not satisfied with the speaker's apology, it is very likely that a further accusation (or request, complaint) will be made. This is particularly common in cases where the severity of the offence is high. On the other hand, it is also rare in a real life situation for the speaker only to take one turn in apologizing, without reacting further to the hearer's responses. The role plays thus resulted in what were often lengthy interactions, in which the participants negotiated their way to a resolution.



In this study, hearer effect was considered in terms of understanding the function of apologies as well as deciding where the apology event ends. Apology was therefore viewed as a way of negotiating power and social rights between the speaker and hearer. The following diagram demonstrates possible apology strategies involving negotiation:



**Figure 3.2 Possible apology strategies during negotiation**

The conversation continues until a balance or harmony is achieved by the initiator and the respondent, or alternatively until their interpersonal relationship is damaged.

Of course, not all apologies in real life are elicited by accusations. Negotiation might not occur in all situations. However, this type of interaction did appear in the current data.

Third, both speech act analysis and conversation analysis were used to analyze data in the current study. Since much of the research previously conducted on speech acts draws on non-interactional sources (e.g. written questionnaire), the analytical approach has been

relatively one-dimensional. As Kasper (2004:125) points out, 'even when the data is interactional, it is standard analytical practice to isolate the focal speech act from its interactional environment, submit its linguistic design to scrutiny, and relate the identified meaning and form conventions to discourse-external context factors'. However, this approach does not work very well with certain speech acts such as refusal, complaint, or repeated request.

Due to its interactional nature, it is argued that the open role play data needs quantitative analysis from a conversational perspective due to its interactional nature. To obtain a quantitative measurement, turn length and number of turns were considered. In summary, two levels of analysis were operationalised: micro and macro. The micro level focussed on the apology as a speech act. The macro level looked at discourse and examined turn length and sequential organization of apology strategies in use.

### **3.7.3 Procedures and Software Used**

In order to store and analyze data in a systematic manner, both quantitative and qualitative analysis softwares were used in this study. For quantitative analysis, the software used was SPSS version 13; for qualitative analysis, N6 was used. Descriptive analysis of the data was performed and various tests such as factor analysis, correlation and chi-square were conducted to examine the data. Learner groups were analyzed for attributes characterizing their pragmatic competence and transfer. In order to examine which independent variables had predictive power in determining the dependent variables, logistic and linear regressions were employed. Afterwards, ANOVAs and logistic and multiple regressions were conducted to test for statistical significance in use of apology strategies across different groups, and to examine the effects of various factors on pragmatic transfer. Finally, common themes from the interviews were identified and simple tabulations were



taken of the numbers of participants who responded in a certain way. The results from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses are presented in the following chapter.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, detailed methodological considerations and research procedures of this study have been illustrated. The design of the study aimed to ensure both validity and reliability through a combination of methods from various research approaches. In the next three chapters, findings of open role-plays, evaluative questionnaire and interviews are presented respectively.

# Chapter 4 Findings: Open Role-plays

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the role play data are presented for four groups of participants in the following order: 1. native speakers of British English (NB); 2. native speakers of Mandarin Chinese (NC); 3. Chinese learners of English (CESL); and 4. British learners of Mandarin Chinese (BCSL). Each group data set was analyzed according to strategy type across role play situations (RSs), content and format of strategy choice, sequences and patterns of apologies and frequency of occurrence employed by the participants. The apology data were collected via an open role-play consisting of twelve apology situations (see Chapter 3). Table 4.1 shows the classification and sequence of apology situations represented in this study.

Role-play Situations (RSs)		Social power	Social distance	Severity of offence
1.	Mobile rang in tutorial	S<H	Close	Low
2.	Missed tutorial	S<H	Close	High
3.	Noise complaint	S>H	Close	High
4.	Late for interview	S<H	Far	High
5.	Mistook stranger for friend	S=H	Far	Low
6.	Forgot to return book	S<H	Far	Low
7.	Mistaken amount	S>H	Far	Low
8.	Cancelled cinema date	S>H	Close	Low
9.	Forgot DVD	S=H	Close	Low
10.	Spilt soup on waitress	S>H	Far	High
11.	Damaged friend's mobile	S=H	Close	High
12.	Gave wrong deadline	S=H	Far	High

Table 4.1 Classification and sequence of role play situations

As discussed in Chapter 2, different researchers have used different categorisations of apology strategies. To facilitate comparison with findings from previous studies, I followed the classification system used most frequently until now, that proposed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and further developed in the CCSARP project. This classification consists of five main strategies (S1-S5) with sub-strategies:

- S1 an explicit expression of apology (Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices)
- S2 an expression of responsibility
- S3 an explanation or account of the offence



- S4 an offer of repair
- S5 a promise of forbearance

Amendments were made where necessary as data emerged from the current research. This was found essential as the above taxonomy is still largely based on western languages.

## 4.2 Native Speakers of British English

### 4.2.1 Use of Strategies and Sub-strategies

This section focuses on both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the apology strategies and sub-strategies used by the NB participants. Examples of how each sub-strategy was used in situations are presented.

#### Strategy 1 Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs)

Role-Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>IFIDs</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>534</b>
IFID	26	27	18	11	29	10	12	32	11	20	34	18	248
Intensifier	18	12	4	26	9	15	0	27	12	27	27	27	204
Emotional expression	3	8	0	0	8	0	4	5	2	10	6	1	47
Double intensifier	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	8	1	5	0	1	19
Please	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Expression marked for register	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Concern for hearer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	15

Table 4.2 Number of times ‘IFIDs’ and sub-strategies used by NBs

#### IFID

‘IFID’ was one of the most frequent sub-strategies of IFIDs that NB participants used across all the RSs. It was used particularly often in RS8 and RS11. In both RSs, social distance was close. It was also used frequently in RS1 and RS2, in which there was power difference. Here are some examples. In all the examples, A. refers to the assistant and P. refers to the participant.

#### Example 1 (NB/M, RS1)

(Phone rings. S picks up the phone and switches it off)

- P: Sorry.
- A: Can you remember to keep that off in the future when you come to see me?
- P: Yeah.



Example 2 (NB/F, RS9)

A: Ok, good. Did you bring the DVD?  
P: Eh... no. **Sorry**.  
A: I thought you said you would bring it.

In the current data set, NB participants used four IFID formulae for the most conventionalized and routine of apologies. In Figure 4.1, these four IFID formulae used by NB participants are presented. The figures refer to the number of occurrences of entire strategy formula in the data. In the majority of circumstances, there was one type of IFID formulae per role play situation; if there were more, different IFID formulae within the same role play were counted individually, while repetition of the same formula was considered as a single occurrence.

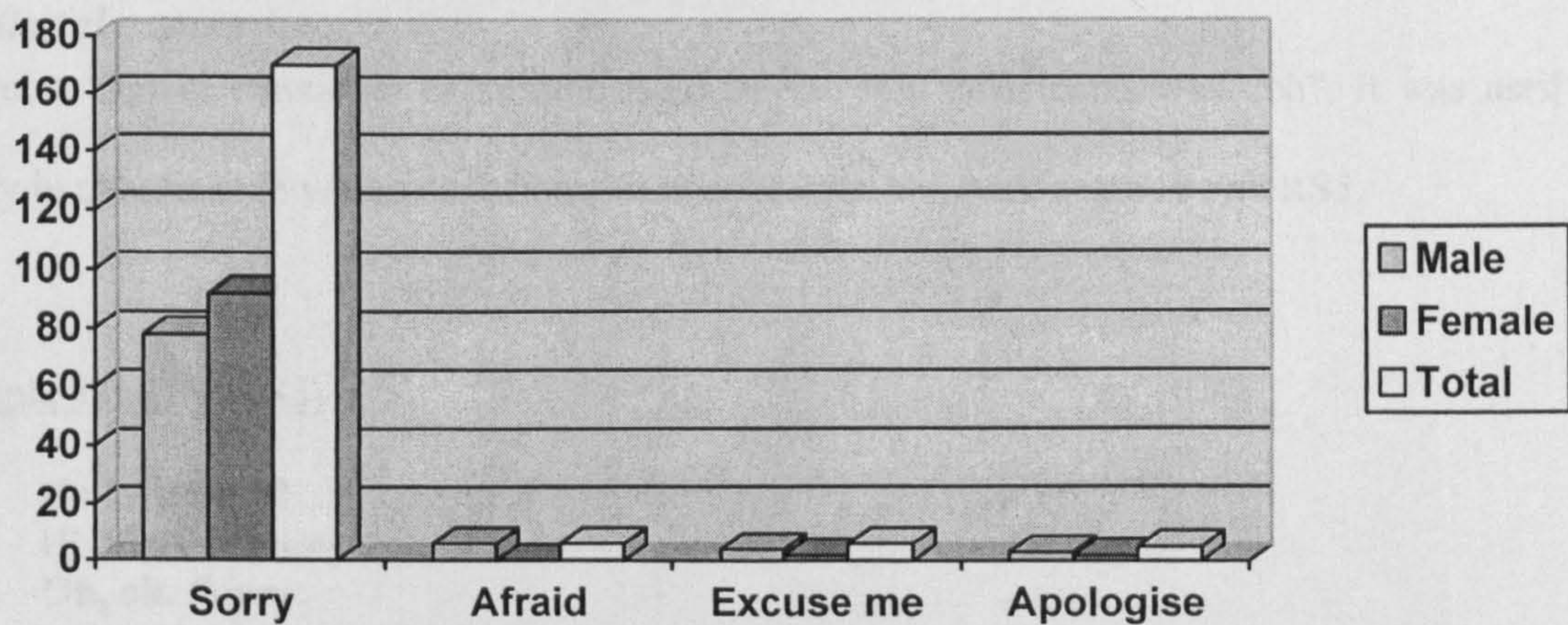


Figure 4.1 IFIDs formulae in NB data

As shown in Figure 4.1, ‘sorry’ was the predominant form for both male (n=78) and female (n=92). The other three formulae were used with a relatively low occurrence as follows: ‘afraid’ (m=6, f=0), ‘excuse me’ (m=4, f=2) and ‘apologise’ (m=3, n=2).

**Intensifier**

As shown in Table 4.2, the occurrence of ‘intensifying’ was higher in the following RSs where severity of offence was higher: RS4, 10, 11 and 12. It was also used often in RS8, in which social distance between the speaker and hearer was very close. The most common intensifiers



used by the NB participants were “so” and “really”. On a few occasions, “terribly” was also used.

#### Example 3 (NB/M, RS10)

P: eh, oh, God. Are you ok?  
A: Not really.  
P: No. How do you want...how ... **I can't apologize enough.** I am so sorry.

#### Example 4 (NB/M, RS4)

A: Hello, come in.  
P: Hi. I am **terribly sorry**. I was about 2 hours late. I was stuck in the traffic.

#### *Emotional expressions*

The most typical emotional expression used by the NB participants was “oh”. It was used mostly in situations in which the offence was unpredictable, such as RS10 and RS5.

#### Example 5 (NB/F, RS5)

P: Hello? Jenny?  
A: Hi, I'm not Jenny.  
P: **Oh, oh. Sorry.**

It was quite often the case that the NB participants used emotional expressions along with intensifiers, as shown in example 6.

#### Example 6 (NB/M, RS8)

A: Oh, no, I am really looking forward to it.  
P: **Oh, I am sorry.** I am **really** sorry. I am looking forward to it too. I would love to go. It's just not going to be possible.

#### *Double intensifiers*

‘Double intensifiers’ were used more frequently by the female participants, especially in situations where offence was severe.

#### Example 7 (NB/F, RS6)

P: No. Do you know, I am **so so sorry**. I, do you know, I have read it and I took all the notes I needed, I copied everything I needed, I just, I just forgot all about it. It's at home. I know exactly where it is now. It's sitting on the top of the television with my notes. I'm so sorry.

#### Example 8 (NB/M, RS4)

A: But you are two hours late.  
P: I wasn't, it wasn't my fault.  
A: It's a lot, isn't it?  
P: Yeah, it's a lot. Oh. (Pauses) I had no way. **Please forgive me.**

#### ***Concern for hearer***

According to the CCSARP coding manual, this sub-strategy refers to how the speaker takes explicit cognizance of the hearer's feelings, which he or she may have offended.

It was mainly used in RS10.

#### Example 9 (NB/M, RS10)

A: Okay good, some soup?  
P: Oh yeah that's me. Cheers. Ah damn. Oh no.  
A: Oooh arrr.  
P: **You alright there?**

### **Strategy 2 Taking on responsibility**

This strategy is said to have a direct link to the speaker's cost and loss of face (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Blum-Kulka et al, 1989). The following nine sub-strategies were identified in the data. The participants showed how much responsibility they were prepared to take for the offence with these sub-strategies.

#### ***Explicit self-blame***

This sub-strategy does not occur often in the NB data. The only situation in which it was used very frequently by the participants was RS12 (n=24).



Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>Taking on responsibility</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>329</b>
Explicit self-blame	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	2	4	24	43
Implicit self-blame	17	20	2	17	4	9	0	9	16	0	9	17	120
Lack of intent	2	0	6	18	0	1	0	12	1	1	16	8	65
Expression of embarrassment	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	5	0	9
Justify hearer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5	6
Indication of effort to avoid offence	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
Refusal to acknowledge guilt	0	9	1	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	18
Eliciting empathy	7	3	0	16	1	4	9	7	4	0	4	9	64
Expression of self-deficiency	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

**Table 4.3 Number of times ‘taking of responsibility’ and sub-strategies used by NBs**

#### Example 10 (NB/M, RS12)

- A: Hey how’s it going?  
P: Fine fine. Er its really hard to speak but I have told you that **I made a mistake** last time I told you the deadline of that essay.  
Al Yeah.

#### ***Implicit self-blame***

This sub-strategy was the most popular amongst NB participants when taking on responsibility for an offence (n=120). It was used often in severe offence situations such as RS2 (n=20), RS4 (n=17) and RS12 (n=17). It was also used in low offence situations between close relationships, such as RS1 (n=17) and RS9 (n=16).

#### Example 11 (NB/M, RS6)

- A: I have been looking for you everywhere. Have you got that book I lent you?  
P: Er . Yeah, because **I forgot it to return to you.**  
A: Yeah, you told me you would bring it back to me last Monday.

#### Example 12 (NB/F, RS9)

- P: Do you want to do something else? Do you want to go somewhere else, you know, perhaps we can go to see some musical?  
A: Yeah, we can go to the pub. We can watch it another time.  
P: I know. I will bring it. **Coz I know I did promise.** It’s one we both want to see, isn’t it?

### *Lack of intent*

This sub-strategy involves the speaker explicitly stating that he or she had not intended to hurt the hearer through his or her offence. The NB participants used it mainly in the following three situations: RS4 (n=18), RS11 (n=16) and RS12 (n=12).

#### Example 13 (NB/M, RS4)

- A: Okay, its very unprofessional you are this late. You should have set off a lot earlier.  
P: Well right. **I just didn't realise the traffic was going to be that bad.**  
A: Ok well we'll be in touch.

#### Example 14 (NB/F, RS8)

- P: Could you make it tomorrow night do you think?  
A: Whaaat. I am just about to walk out the door. I have got all my clothes on.  
P: I am really sorry **all this work has just come up at work that I didn't know about before** and I have been asked to stay really late so I am really sorry but we can definitely do it in the next few days.

### *Expression of embarrassment*

This sub-strategy was not used frequently. The NB participants expressed embarrassment in RS11 (n=5) and in RS5 (n=2).

#### Example 15 (NB/M, RS11)

- P: Is it under warranty?  
A: Well, I don't know. I only bought it today.  
P: **Well, I was like. I don't know what to do.** I guess you could at least try to get it fixed or get warranty or something like that. If not, well you just let me know, I will try to sort it out. **I don't know what got into me today, it's very unfortunate.**  
A: Yeah, tell me about it.

### *Justify hearer*

The participants used this sub-strategy to communicate to the hearer that they will understand the latter's reaction or possible reaction to the offence. It was mainly employed in RS12 (n=5).

#### Example 16 (NB/F, RS12)

- P: I've got something to tell you. **I am not sure what you are going to think.** The deadline of the essay A, the history essay erm...



A: Yeah.

### *Indication of effort to avoid offence*

This is a new category in addition to the existing CCSARP coding manual. The participants used this sub-strategy to indicate the effort they made to avoid the offence. NB participants only used this strategy a few times. It was mainly used in RS4.

#### Example 17 (NB/M, RS4)

A: Two hours late is... I am very sorry.

P: **I did try to phone to say and the reception was engaged for a long time. Then my phone died.**

A: Ok, we've finished for today. We've been busy all day. If you ring, maybe we will be able to re-schedule.

### *Refusal to acknowledge guilt*

There were situations in which the NB participants explicitly denied that they were in any way responsible for the offence. In RS2, where it was not clear who had got the wrong time for the tutorial, and also in RS4, where the cause of being late to the interview was bad traffic, participants chose this sub-strategy more often.

#### Example 18 (NB/F, RS2)

A: Right, I've got you in my diary for yesterday at this time. So I think you got the days wrong.

P: **No, no, I don't think so.**

A: You're definitely in my diary for this time yesterday.

P: **No, it's today, definitely. I wouldn't do it, I wouldn't have done it yesterday. I was too busy yesterday.**

The same participant also provided arguments in which she sought to persuade the hearer that no blame could be attached to her or at least that her actions could be fully justified in the above situation.

#### Example 19 (NB/F, RS2)

- A: Eh, that must have been the time I had arranged with you. So, maybe you've misunderstood or written it down wrongly.  
B: **I wouldn't do it on Friday. I wouldn't. I wouldn't.**  
A: Right.  
B: **No way, coz I got other things to do... on Friday.**

The following is another example of refusing blame by offering justification. The participant used her birthday as a reason for hosting a party with loud music.

#### Example 20 (NB/F, RS3)

- A: Yeah. It's midnight and I'm trying to sleep coz I've got an exam really early in the morning. En..  
B: **Well, it's my birthday!**  
A: I know. You were disturbing me a little bit.  
B: **I thought you would come in.**

#### ***Eliciting empathy***

This sub-strategy also emerged from the current data set. It refers to the speaker agreeing with or demonstrating understanding of the hearer's feelings towards and opinions about the offence. It was quite frequently used by the NB participants, especially in severe offence situations. The following is an example of how a NB participant used this sub-strategy.

#### Example 21 (NB/F, RS8)

- A: ah ... I am really looking forward to it!  
P: **I know you were.** I'm really sorry. What we have to do is think of a day later in the week that we can go instead, because I really wouldn't, I would take you if I didn't have so much work.

#### ***Expression of self-deficiency***

This sub-strategy involves the speaker demeaning oneself and thus accepting the blame. Only one female participant used it in RS5.



Example 22 (NB/F, RS5)

A: I'm not Jenny. I think you got the wrong person.  
P: God. **Do you know I'm always doing that?** I'm so sorry.  
A: Oh, doesn't matter.

**Strategy 3 Explanation or account**

Explanation or account was not a strategy used very often by the NB participants in this study. Mainly, the participants either stated a reason for or cause of the offence, or attempted to elicit sympathy from the hearer. The NB participants opted for sub-strategy 'stating reason' mostly in RS4 (n=32) and 8 (n=28). In these two cases, the participants also used more 'Eliciting sympathy' (n=4 and n=6 respectively).

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>Explanation or account</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>152</b>
Stating reason	6	6	8	32	16	8	2	28	6	0	3	21	136
Eliciting sympathy	0	0	1	4	2	0	0	6	3	0	0	0	16

**Table 4.4** Number of times 'explanation or account' and sub-strategies used by NBs

*Stating reason*

Example 23 (NB/M, RS4)

A: Yeah, you are two hours late.  
P: I am really sorry. **There was a real problem with the traffic getting here.** It took me a lot longer than I expected.  
A: Well, I am sorry but two hours late is unacceptable really.

*Eliciting sympathy*

Example 24 (NB/F, RS8)

A: You are joking. I am all ready. I've got my clothes on and my make up.  
P: You've got your clothes on? Sorry, I really can't do it tonight. I've just got so much work going on. **I am just really stressed and I can't do it now.**  
A: Oh, come on. I am looking forward to it so much.  
P: Honestly, I can't.

Strategy 4 Managing the problem

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
Managing the problem	29	38	27	35	0	49	13	47	23	30	54	50	395
Offering repair/solution/suggestion	10	9	11	15	0	20	12	32	12	18	43	28	210
Being co-operative	17	22	12	7	0	25	1	10	10	12	10	18	144
Refusing to repair	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	6
Negotiating	2	7	3	13	0	4	0	0	1	0	1	4	35

Table 4.5 Number of times ‘managing the problem’ and sub-strategies used by NBs

This coding category was used to substitute ‘Offer of repair’ as proposed in CCSARP coding manual due to the following reasons. First, not all the offences are repairable. Therefore, ‘offer of repair’ seems to be too narrow to include all the strategies speaker could use. Second, the interactional nature of the open role play results in a more dynamic style of problem managing rather than just offering a remedy. Therefore, it is argued that the category ‘managing the problem’ (Tanaka et al 2000) is more suitable for coding the data that appeared in this study. Four sub-strategies were coded and will be explained as follows.

*Offer of repair/solution/suggestion*

This sub-strategy refers to when the speaker offers any kind of help or solution towards the offence. This was the most commonly used strategy across situations. It was particularly frequent in high severe situations such as RS11 (n=43) and RS12 (n= 28). It was also used more often in situation of close relationships such as RS8 (n=32).

Example 25 (NB/F, RS8)

P: I can’t spare 3 hours. Don’t let me ruin your whole evening. We’ll go tomorrow, ok? I promise you we’ll go tomorrow.  
A: I am busy tomorrow.  
P: The day after tomorrow?

Example 26 (NB/M, RS6)

A: Yeah, and I really need it.  
P: I am going that way. Can I go back and give it back to you later?



- A: Ok. Can you give it to me as soon as possible?  
P: Ok, sure.

### *Being cooperative*

This strategy refers to when the speaker completely agrees or follows any suggestions or requests the hearer proposes towards the remedy of the offence. The NB participants used it more frequently in situations where there was a power difference, such as RS6 (n=25) and RS2 (n=22).

#### Example 27 (NB/M, RS6)

- A: Can you give it to me this afternoon then?  
P: Possibly.  
A: Because I really need it for a report.  
P: **Ok, I will drop it into your office then.**  
A: Ok, that would be really good.

#### Example 28 (NB/F, RS12)

- A: Emm. Well, maybe we can go to see the tutor together and explain and I might get an extension? Will you go to see the tutor with me?  
P: **Of course, I will, definitely.**  
A: Cool. That's good. Will you meet me later on to see the tutor?

### *Negotiating*

This strategy refers to when the speaker negotiates his or her way towards any suggestions or requests that the hearer proposes towards the remedy of the offence. This is usually done by asking questions or making further suggestions. Negotiation strategies were used mainly in RS4 (n=13) and RS2 (n=2).

#### Example 29 (NB/M, RS4)

- P: **Well, is it really too late to have an interview now?** I know it gives a bad impression for me to be late for the interview but I'm not normally late and I promise I won't be late in the future. I know the way, I know the traffic now and I won't do it again.  
A: We've actually already chosen the best candidates, and we've got some very good people this time.  
P: Well, I am sure you have. **But I do think I will be very good at this job. Obviously what I would say you could say no but I just want you to know that it would be a**

shame, if I was the best the person for the job, to not give me a chance just because of a single mistake.

A: I am sorry but first impressions do matter and we cannot hire someone who turned up two hours late and we met someone who was here on time and gave a good interview.

P: Well, if I was like loads better than them. I probably won't be or may not be, but you know all I need is just a chance.

### Example 30 (NB/F, RS2)

P: I'm sorry. But I haven't got my diary with me either. I just you know. Sorry.

A: Right. Ok. If we make another meeting for Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> of June at 2pm, is it good?

P: Well, eh,eh....ok..

A: Or do you want to email me [with the time?

P: [Can I do that? Can I email you?

A: Yeah. Yeah.

P: Coz Friday is really bad for me.

In the above situation, the NB participant first apologised explicitly and explained why she got the wrong date. However, when they needed to work a new time for the tutorial, she was not being totally co-operative with what the tutor suggested. Instead, she showed reluctance and then suggested to email the tutor with a better date.

### ***Refuse repair***

The speaker rejects any proposal or suggestions given by the hearer. This strategy was used very few times by the NB participants.

### Example 31 (NB/F, RS3)

A: Do you think you can turn your music down a bit?

P: Well, I don't know. I don't know. You know, I am, I am still the senior person here and it's my birthday, one day here. I did invite you and you didn't say you wouldn't come up. I just assumed you would come in!

A: Right. I'm sorry. I would. I forgot to tell you that I've got an exam. And it's really early.

In the above situation, the participant refused to turn the music down and also blamed the hearer for not attending her birthday party.



Strategy 5 Promise of forbearance

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
Promise of forbearance	4	18	0	4	0	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	32

Table 4.6 Number of times ‘promise of forbearance’ used by NBs

This strategy was not chosen frequently by the NB participants. It was only used relatively often in RS2 (n=18).

Example 32 (NB/F, RS2)

P: Yeah, let’s reschedule and I’ll come and see you again whenever you can fit me in.  
A: Yeah, yeah, okay.  
P: I will definitely be there. I’ll write it down this time and make sure it doesn’t happen again.

Strategy 6 Distracting from the offence

As shown in Table 4.7, there are seven sub-strategies of distracting from the offence. Across all the situations, ‘switching the topic’ was the mostly frequently used sub-strategy and ‘appeasing’ was the least frequently used one for the NB participants. Examples of how the NB participants used each sub-strategy will be listed as follows.

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
Distracting from the offence	1	34	22	13	15	21	4	38	45	11	27	37	268
Acting innocently	0	16	0	1	3	14	2	2	11	0	6	0	55
Task-oriented remark	0	0	4	0	0	1	2	8	11	1	2	11	40
Making comment	0	3	0	3	6	1	0	2	5	0	2	5	27
Invitation to hearer for suggestions	0	7	0	1	0	3	0	5	6	8	3	6	39
Switching the topic	1	8	18	6	4	2	0	9	7	0	14	10	79
Appeasing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	3	0	0	0	9
Humour	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	6	2	2	0	5	19

Table 4.7 Number of times ‘distracting from the offence’ and sub-strategies used by NBs

Acting innocently

This sub-strategy was used most frequently in RS2 (n=16) as well as RS6 (n=14). It seemed that this sub-strategy was particularly related to the type of the offence.

### Example 33 (NB/M, RS2)

- A: Erm no, you haven't. You had a meeting with me yesterday. You scheduled with me for yesterday. I sat here waiting for you.  
P: **Did you? Oh!**  
A: You didn't turn up.

### *Task-oriented remark*

By using this sub-strategy, the participants tried to make light of his or her offence by diverting the hearer's attention from the past (his or her offence) to the future (what needs to be done now). The NB participants used this sub-strategy mainly in the following three RSs: RS 9 (n=11), RS12 (n=11) and RS8 (n=8).

### Example 34 (NB/M, RS8)

- A: I am thinking like tomorrow night. How come you didn't do this before?  
P: I seriously didn't know. I had this evening free. I did have it free until this afternoon I got called by my supervisor and he gave me lots of work to do. Yeah, I told him I couldn't really do it but he wasn't listening. And I am really sorry. I really haven't got anything else to say to make it better any better, I am afraid. **I still want to go. So if you are still free any time at the weekend, let me know.**

### *Making comments*

Some participants, especially the female participants, tended to make comments on the situation to distract the hearer's attention away from the offence or to create solidarity with the hearer. This sub-strategy was not used frequently over all.

### Example 35 (NB/F, RS6)

- A: Do you have it with you?  
P: No. Do you know, I am so so sorry. **I, do you know, I have read it and I took all the notes I needed, I copied everything I needed, I just I just forgot all about it. It's at home, I know exactly where it is now. It's sitting on the top of the television with my notes. I'm so sorry.**  
P: Right. Can you bring it to my office sometime today?

### Example 36 (NB/F, RS11)

- P: Sorry.  
A: I am sure my insurance will cover it. I will give them a ring tonight and see it will cover it.



P: I haven't got insurance. That's really useful.

A: Yeah. Yeah.

### *Invitation to hearer for suggestions*

Some participants used this sub-strategy to distract the hearer away from the offence towards any suggestions or solutions appropriate to the situation. It was used mainly in situations where severity of offence was high, such as RS2 (n=7), RS10 (n=8) and RS12 (n=6).

#### Example 37 (NB/M, RS2)

A: Erm yes, bring it back this afternoon because I need it today. Okay?

P: Okay. I will definitely bring it back this afternoon. **Any particular time or just any time this afternoon?**

A: Erm probably before three will be really good.

### *Switching the topic*

'Switching the topic' was the most frequently used sub-strategy of 'distracting from the offence'. It was used in various situations. The NB participants used it most in RS3 (n=18). The following example showed how the participant tried to switch the attention away from the offence by inviting the hearer for a drink.

#### Example 38 (NB/F, RS3)

A: I would. It's just because I've got an exam so early in the morning.

P: **Oh, well well, don't you want a drink? Come in and have a quick drink. A quick drink with me.**

A: Oh, no. I really got to go to sleep.

P: **No, go on. Just one drink. One drink.**

A: Seriously I got to get up for 6 hours, it takes 6 hours.

The following is another example of using sub-strategy 'switching the topic'. The participant didn't bring the DVD as promised but then switched the topic to the content of the movie.

#### Example 39 (NB/M, RS9)

A: We said we would watch Shriek 2, man.

P: That's right.

A: I know.

P: **Have you seen it?**

A: No, well, you...

*Appeasing*

‘Appeasing’ refers to compensatory offers which are not directly connected with the speaker’s offence. The NB participants only used this sub-strategy in RS8 (n=6) and RS9 (n=3).

Example 40 (NB/F, RS8)

- P: I am really sorry all this work has just come up at work that I didn’t know about before and I have been asked to stay really late so I am really sorry but we can definitely do it in the next few days.
- A: Ah oh.
- P: Is that okay with you? **Maybe we can go to Pizza Hut or somewhere for a nice big pizza? It’s all on me.**
- A: Oh.

*Humour*

‘Humour’ was used as a sub-strategy to pacify the hearer. It was mainly used in RS 8 (n=6) and RS12 (n=5). It was used mainly by male participants. The following is an example.

Example 41 (NB/M, RS12)

- P: You know the essay you’ve asked me about, have you done it?
- A: No, I haven’t started yet. I am going to do it next week.
- P: **Right, funny story.**
- A: How funny?
- P: **Not very.** It’s due tomorrow. I got it wrong. That was the deadline for the other essay which I gave to you. I thought I’d better let you know. I just realized.

**Strategy 7 Reassurance**

There was no sub-strategy under ‘reassurance’.

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
Reassurance	0	4	9	1	0	12	0	16	6	1	11	15	75

**Table 4.8 Number of times ‘reassurance’ used by NBs**

Participants used this strategy to either guarantee a repair would be delivered or to comfort the hearer by ensuring the situation was under control. It was used often in situations where the offence was severe.



Example 42 (NB/M, RS3)

P: Yeah, sorry. I didn't tell you earlier. I thought, I thought I probably invited you.  
A: Yeah, no.  
P: Yeah, sorry.  
A: Yeah, cheers.  
P: Yeah, sure, sure, do our best.

In example 41, the hearer was complaining about loud music and asked the participant to turn the music down. Therefore, the participant used a 'reassurance' strategy to indicate that he would turn the music down and keep it down.

**4.2.2 Distribution of Each Strategy across All Situations**

Summarizing the numbers from the previous section, the most frequent strategy used by NB participants was S1 IFIDs (n= 534), followed by S4 'managing the problems' (n= 395), S2 'taking on responsibility' (n=329), S6 'distracting from the offence' (n=268), S3 'explanation or account' (n=152), S7 'reassurance' (n=75) and S5 'promise of future forbearance' (n=32). In percentage terms, 91% of the NB participants used strategy IFIDs, the strategy used most frequently by all participants. 87% of the NB participants also chose S4, which was the second most frequently chosen strategy by both male (42%) and female (45%) participants. The third most frequent strategies for male participants were equally S2 (31%) and S6 (31%). Female participants used S2 more often, and also offered more explanation than male participants. The strategy chosen least often by both male and female NB participants was S5 (11%). Table 4.9 shows the frequency with which each strategy was used by NB participants in each situation.

***IFIDs***

Overall, correlation analysis revealed that severity of offence had a significant effect on the selection of IFIDs ( $r=0.219$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). As shown in Table 4.9, all the participants used IFIDs in RS1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10 and 11, in which both low and high severity contexts were involved. The situation in which IFIDs were least frequently used by the NB participants (n=11, 68.8%) was RS3.

### ***Taking on responsibility***

All the NB participants used strategy 'taking on responsibility' in RS4, 8 and 12. RS4 and 12 were high severity contexts and the social distance was far. Yet in RS8, severity was low and social distance was close. Only 12.5% of the participants ( $n=2$ ) chose 'taking on responsibility' in RS10. Statistical analysis showed that 'taking on responsibility' had a negative correlation with social power ( $r=-0.167$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and a positive correlation with severity of the offence ( $r=0.289$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

### ***Explanation or account***

'Explanation or account' was selected with high frequency in RS4, 5, 8 and 12. This strategy was not otherwise used very often by NB participants. The correlation test found no significant effects of contextual factors on the selection of 'explanation or account'.

### ***Managing the problem***

'Managing the problem' was the second most frequently used strategy after IFIDs. With the exception of RS5, all the NB participants used this strategy in every RS. Again, no correlation was found between this strategy and the contextual factors.

### ***Promise of future forbearance***

NB participants employed 'promise of future forbearance' only on a few occasions. In RS2, 50% of the participants used this strategy. In RS1 and RS6, 25% of the participants chose to promise that this would not happen in the future. These were all situations where social distance was far. Both social distance ( $r=0.572$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and severity of the offence ( $r=0.571$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) were found to have an impact on NB participants' choice of this strategy in the correlation test.



RSs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>Apology strategies</b>												
S1. IFIDs	16 (100%)	16 (100%)	11 (68.8%)	16 (100%)	16 (100%)	12 (75%)	12 (75%)	16 (100%)	13 (81.3%)	16 (100%)	16 (100%)	14 (87.5%)
S2. Taking on responsibility	12 (75%)	13 (81.3%)	6 (37.5%)	16 (100%)	5 (31.3%)	10 (62.5%)	9 (56.3%)	16 (100%)	14 (87.5%)	2 (12.5%)	14 (87.5%)	16 (100%)
S3. Explanation or account	6 (37.5%)	6 (37.5%)	4 (25%)	16 (100%)	15 (93.8%)	8 (50%)	2 (12.5%)	14 (87.5%)	5 (31.3%)	0	3 (18.3%)	14 (87.5%)
S4. Managing the problem	16 (100%)	16 (100%)	16 (100%)	16 (100%)	0	16 (100%)	13 (81.3%)	16 (100%)	14 (87.5%)	14 (87.5%)	15 (93.8%)	15 (93.8%)
S5. Promise of future forbearance	4 (25%)	8 (50%)	0	3 (18.3%)	0	4 (25%)	0	1 (6.3%)	1 (6.3%)	0	0	0
S6. Distracting from the offence	1 (6.3%)	15 (93.8%)	12 (75%)	8 (50%)	10 (62.5%)	11 (68.8%)	4 (25%)	12 (75%)	14 (87.5%)	8 (50%)	14 (87.5%)	15 (93.8%)
S7. Reassurance	0	4 (25%)	5 (31.3%)	1 (6.3%)	0	8 (50%)	0	12 (75%)	6 (37.5%)	1 (6.3%)	8 (50%)	10 (62.5%)

Table 4.9 Frequency of strategy use by NB (n=16) participants across situations

### ***Distracting from the offence***

In the NB data, 'distracting from the offence' was found to be correlated with social distance ( $r=0.278$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The participants used this strategy both in close and far social distance relationships. In RS2 and RS12, where the severity of offence was high, 93.8% of the participants used this strategy. This strategy was used least in RS1.

### ***Reassurance***

NB participants used 'reassurance' in situations where more repair work was required, such as RS2, 11 and 12. No statistical correlation was found between participants' choice of this strategy and the three contextual factors.

## **4.2.3 Gender Differences in Strategy Use**

In this section, apology strategy use in terms of gender differences is presented. It aims to highlight major differences between male and female NB participants. For a detailed description of the number of times each strategy and sub-strategy was used by male and female participants please refer to Table 4.10.

Overall, female NB participants used a higher number of apology strategies than their male equivalents, especially in the case of using IFIDs. Female participants used almost 50% more IFIDs than male participants. Female participants used significantly more (almost three times as many) 'intensifiers' and 'double intensifiers' than male participants, whereas male participants employed more emotional expressions such as "oh", "oh, no", and "oh, God".

When the participants tried to manage the problem, both male and female participants followed a similar pattern, which was to offer repair or suggestion most frequently, followed by sub-strategies 'being co-operative', 'negotiation' and 'refusing to repair'. However, it seemed that male participants on average played a more active role by using the sub-strategy 'offering



repair/solution/suggestion’ more frequently than female participants; whereas female participants tended to play a rather more co-operative role, using the sub-strategy ‘being co-operative’ more frequently than male participants.

Participants	M (n=8)	F (n=8)	Total (n=16)
Strategy Type	Number of times apology strategies used		
<b>1. IFIDs</b>	<b>208 (38.9%)</b>	<b>326 (61.1%)</b>	<b>534 (100%)</b>
• IFID	108 (20.2%)	140 (26.2%)	248 (46.4%)
• Intensifiers	56 (10.5)	148 (27.7%)	204 (38.2%)
• Emotional expressions	32 (6.0%)	15 (2.0%)	47 (8.0%)
• Double intensifier	2 (0.4%)	17 (3.2%)	19 (3.6%)
• Please	1 (0.2%)	0	1 (0.2%)
• Expression marked for register	0	0	0
• Concern for hearer	9 (1.6%)	6 (1.0%)	15 (2.6%)
<b>2. Taking on responsibility</b>	<b>153 (46.5%)</b>	<b>176 (53.5%)</b>	<b>329 (100%)</b>
• Explicit self-blame	34 (10.3%)	9 (2.7%)	43 (13.0%)
• Implicit self-blame	36 (10.9%)	84 (25.5%)	120 (36.4%)
• Lack of intent	34 (10.3%)	31(9.4%)	65 (19.7%)
• Expression of embarrassment	7 (2.1%)	2 (0.6%)	9 (2.7%)
• Justify hearer	1 (0.3%)	5 (1.5%)	6 (1.8%)
• Indication of effort to avoid offence	3 (0.9%)	1 (0.3%)	4 (1.2%)
• Refusal to acknowledge guilt	7 (2.1%)	11 (3.3%)	18 (5.4%)
• Agreeing/creating common ground	31 (9.4%)	33 (10.0%)	64 (19.4%)
• Expression of self-deficiency	1(0.3%)	0	1 (0.3%)
<b>3. Explanation or account</b>	<b>62 (40.8%)</b>	<b>90 (59.2%)</b>	<b>152 (100%)</b>
• Stating reason	55 (36.2%)	81 (53.3%)	136 (89.5%)
• Eliciting sympathy	7 (4.6%)	9 (5.9%)	16 (10.5%)
<b>4. Managing the problem</b>	<b>206 (52.2%)</b>	<b>189 (47.8%)</b>	<b>395 (100%)</b>
• Offering repair/solution/suggestion	117 (29.6%)	93 (23.5%)	210 (53.1%)
• Being co-operative	69 (17.5%)	75 (18.9%)	144 (36.4%)
• Refusing to repair	1 (0.2%)	5 (1.3%)	6 (1.5%)
• Negotiating	19 (4.8%)	16 (4.1%)	35 (8.9%)
<b>5. Promise of forbearance</b>	<b>6 (18.7%)</b>	<b>26 (81.3)</b>	<b>32 (100%)</b>
<b>6. Distracting from the offence</b>	<b>113 (42.2%)</b>	<b>155 (57.8%)</b>	<b>268 (100%)</b>
• Acting innocently	37 (13.8%)	18 (6.7%)	55 (20.5%)
• Task-oriented remark	16 (5.9%)	24 (9.0%)	40 (14.9%)
• Making comment	3 (1.1%)	24 (9.0%)	27 (10.1%)
• Invitation for hearer for suggestions	10 (3.7%)	29 (10.8%)	39 (14.5%)
• Switching the topic	26 (9.7%)	53 (19.8%)	79 (29.5%)
• Appeasing	2 (0.7%)	7 (2.6%)	9 (3.3%)
• Humour	19 (0.7%)	0	19 (0.7%)
<b>7. Reassurance</b>	<b>35 (46.7%)</b>	<b>40 (53.3%)</b>	<b>75 (100%)</b>
<b>8. Others</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Table 4.10 NB gender differences in choices of apology strategies

In the case of the strategy 'taking on responsibility', it is interesting to observe that NB male participants tended to use similar amounts of 'implicit self-blame' (n=36) as 'explicit self-blame' (n=34). Female participants, however, used significantly more 'implicit self-blame' (n=84) than 'explicit self-blame' (n=9). 'Implicit self-blame' was actually the most frequently used sub-strategy by both male and female participants within 'taking on responsibility' and was used twice as much by female as by male participants. Amongst both male and female participants, there was a relatively high use of 'eliciting empathy'.

Female NB participants also used more 'promises of future forbearance' (n=26) than male participants (n=6). Examining sub-strategies within 'distracting from the offence', it was clear that the male participants preferred 'acting innocently' (n=37) as well as 'humour' (n=19), while the female participants favoured 'switching the topic' (n=53).

#### **4.2.4 Patterns of Using Explicit and Implicit Apology Strategies**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, apology strategies could be defined as 'explicit apology strategy' and 'implicit apology strategy' based on level of directness. 'Explicit apology strategies' refer to S1, such as "I'm sorry", "please forgive me", etc. 'Implicit apology strategies' thus refer to the rest of the main strategies which are used to state the reason/cause of the offence (S3), acknowledge wrongdoing (S2) or justify the wrongdoing (S4, S5). Generally speaking, the combination of apology strategies enhances the degree of politeness. The explicit apology functions as the key strategy, while the implicit apology strategies reinforce the explicit apology. This kind of combination of explicit and implicit apology strategies was defined by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1994) as a complex apology.

There were altogether eight patterns of the way that NB participants used explicit and implicit apology strategies: 1. more than one explicit strategy with more than one implicit strategy (Es+Is); 2. more than one explicit strategy with one implicit strategy (Es+I); 3. one explicit



strategy and more than one implicit strategy (E+Is); 4. one explicit strategy and one explicit strategy (E+I); 5. more than one explicit strategy (Es); 6. one explicit strategy (E); 7. more than one implicit strategy (Is) and 8. one implicit strategy (I). These patterns are listed in Table 4.11.

RSs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>Patterns of strategies</b>													
1. Es + Is	7	12	8	10	13	10	2	14	5	14	16	15	126
2. Es + I	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
3. E+ Is	0	4	0	6	0	4	0	2	8	0	0	0	24
4. E+I	1	0	3	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	11
5. Es	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	6
6. E	2	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	8
7. Is	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	1	8
8. I	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	4
Total	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	192

Table 4.11 Patterns of strategies used by NB participants

As can be seen in Table 4.11, ‘Es + Is’ was the most common pattern (65%) used by NB participants over all the situations. The next common pattern was ‘E + Is’ (13%) and it was used mainly in RS9 and RS4. The other patterns were not significant in NB data. Figure 4.2 illustrates the three most frequently used patterns by the NBs.

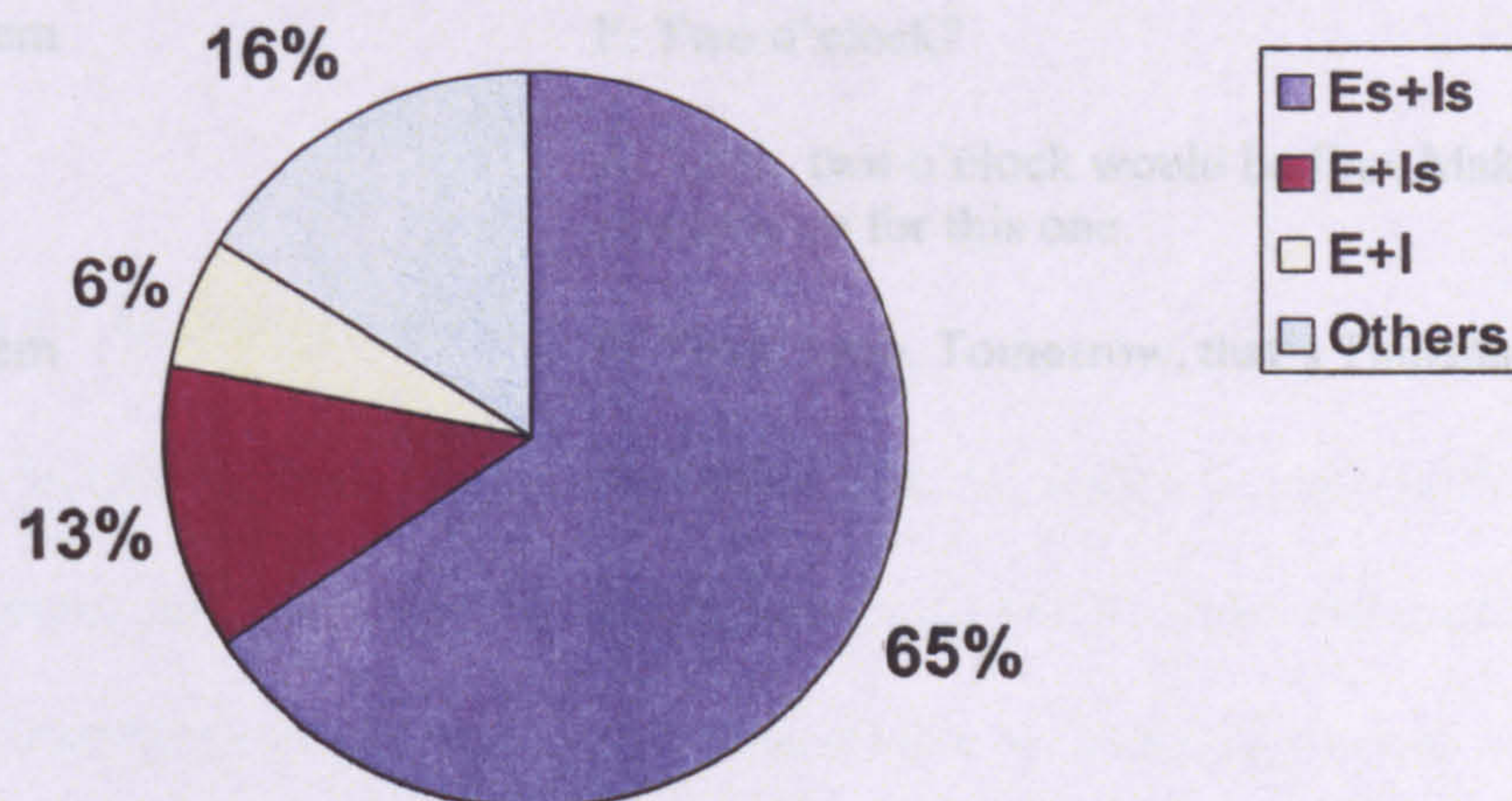


Figure 4.2 Common apology patterns used by the NBs



Examples 43 and 44 show the two of the most frequent patterns found in NB data.

## Es + Is

### Example 43 (NB/ M, RS2)

	A: Come in.
	P: Hi, I've got a meeting?
	A: We've scheduled a meeting; you had a meeting with me yesterday.
Distracting from the offence	P: Yesterday?
	A: Yeah, I sat here waiting for you and you didn't turn up.
Distracting from the offence/IFID/Explain	P: Really? Oh, I am sorry. I thought it was today.
	A: Well, you wrote in your email yesterday. But.
IFID	P: Oh, no. I am sorry to bother you.
	A: I am quite busy at the moment. Could you come back tomorrow?
Managing the problem/IFID	P: Yeah, tomorrow will be fine. I am sorry for yesterday.
	A: What time would you like?
Managing the problem	P: Two o'clock?
	A: Yeah, two o'clock would be fine. Make sure you turn up for this one.
Managing the problem	P: Yeah, yeah. Tomorrow, that's Thursday.
	A: Yeah.
	F: Ok, bye.

## E+Is

### Example 44 (NB/M, RS4)

	A: Come in.
IFID/Explanation or account	P: Hi, I am really sorry. I got held up in the traffic.



	A: Oh, I am sorry. We've just finished all our interviews. You are two hours late.
Taking on responsibility/Explanation	P: Oh, wait, it's not my fault though. I was literally coming out 30 minutes early. There was heavy traffic.
	A: Two hours late is .. I am very sorry.
Taking on responsibility/Explanation	P: I did try to phone to say and the reception was engaged for a long time. Then my phone died.
	A: Ok, we've finished for today. We are all very tired. We've been busy all day. If you ring, maybe we will be able to re-schedule.
Managing the problem	P: I understand that, but I've come from a long way to get to this interview.
	A: Ok, I am very sorry. You've missed your chance basically.
Managing the problem Distracting from the offence	P: Ok. So, there is not another interview round for tomorrow?
	A: You will have to ring and re-schedule.
Managing the problem Distracting from the offence	P: Ok. I will go shopping then.
	A: Ok.

#### 4.2.5 Sequence of Apology Strategy Choice

The NB participants started their apology mostly with IFIDs and tended to finish with IFIDs. The first three strategies used by most NB participants were IFIDs. Then NB participants switched to strategy 'managing the problem' towards the middle of the apology event.

Preferred strategy orders from the first most used apology strategy to the tenth- most used apology strategy by NB participants in each situation are shown in Table 4.12. By examining these, light is shed on the way NB participants organized and arranged their strategy orders.

As shown in Table 4.12, with severe offence situations such as RS4, RS10, RS11 and RS12, most of the NBs started their apology with IFIDs and 'taking on responsibility'. IFIDs were used throughout the apology as well as towards the end of the apology in severe situations as well as in light offence situations. On the other hand, when the offence was light, such as in RS6, RS9, the NBs started their apology with IFIDs and 'distracting from the offence'. This strategy was also used toward the end of an apology in close relationship such as RS8, RS9 and RS12.

'Explanation or account' was used at the beginning of an apology in RS4, RS5, RS8 and RS12. However, this strategy was not used predominately in other orders in other situations. It seems that the NBs thought it was necessary to offer explanation in the case of being late, disturbing a stranger, cancelling a date, and providing wrong information.

In RS1, RS3 and RS6, 'managing the problem' appeared at the beginning of the apology as well as the middle and end. It seemed that the NBs considered it important to use this strategy earlier in these three situations. It could be due to the fact that in these situations, complaints were made and the participants had to address the issue rather quickly. 'Managing the problem' was otherwise mainly used in the middle and at the end of an apology.



RSs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Order	Most frequently used apology strategy at each order in situations											
1 <sup>st</sup>	IFIDs	Distracting from the offence	Managing the problem	IFIDs	IFIDs	Distracting from the offence	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Managing the problem	IFIDs	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility	Explanation or account	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Explanation or account	IFIDs	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility	Explanation or account
3 <sup>rd</sup>	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility	Distracting from the offence	Explanation or account	Explanation or account	IFIDs	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Managing the problem	IFIDs	IFIDs	IFIDs
4 <sup>th</sup>	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility
5 <sup>th</sup>	Taking on responsibility	Taking on responsibility	Managing the problem	IFIDs	IFIDs	Managing the problem	IFIDs	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	IFIDs	IFIDs
6 <sup>th</sup>	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Distracting from the offence	Reassurance		IFIDs	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility
7 <sup>th</sup>	Managing the problem	Distracting from the offence	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	IFIDs	Distracting from the offence		Explanation or account	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs
8 <sup>th</sup>	IFIDs	Promise of Forbearance	Reassurance	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility	Promise of Forbearance		Distracting from the offence	Reassurance	Managing the problem	Reassurance	Managing the problem
9 <sup>th</sup>	Taking on responsibility	Managing the problem	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	Explanation or account	IFIDs		IFIDs	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	IFIDs	Managing the problem
10 <sup>th</sup>	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Reassurance	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	Managing the problem		Distracting from the offence	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	IFIDs	Distracting from the offence

Table 4.12 Preferred strategy orders by NBs in situations

4.3 Native Speakers of Mandarin Chinese

4.3.1 Use of Strategy and Sub-strategies

This section focuses on both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the apology strategies and sub-strategies used by the NC participants. Examples of how each sub-strategy was used in situations are presented.

Strategy 1 Illocutionary force indicating devices

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
IFIDs	29	38	18	33	36	24	21	27	15	61	38	39	379
IFID	19	21	11	19	21	13	15	9	6	12	13	9	170
Intensifying	3	2	4	12	3	5	3	9	8	9	7	10	75
Emotional expression	4	11	0	2	6	2	2	4	1	7	4	6	49
Double intensifier	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	3
Please	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4
Double IFID	3	3	3	0	6	4	1	4	0	11	5	5	43
Concern for hearer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	7	6	35

Table 4.13 Number of times ‘IFIDs’ and sub-strategies used by NCs

IFID

As shown in Table 4.13, the most highly used sub-strategy of ‘IFIDs’ by NC participants was ‘IFID’. As mentioned previously, several apology formulae were used by NC participants. “不好意思” (feeling embarrassed) and “对不起” (sorry) were used in almost all situations. The other apology formulae such as “抱歉” (apologise) and “原谅” (forgive) were used in situations when severity of offence was high. They were used the most in RS5 (n=27) and the least in RS9 (n=6). They were also used more frequently in situations where the social power of the offender was high such as RS1, RS2 and RS4. The following is one example:

Example 45 (NC/F, RS5)

P: 嗨！（拍了一下 P 的肩膀）  
A 回头 茫然）  
P: 不好意思，我认错人了！  
A: 没事。



Translation:

P: Hi. (Touched A's shoulder)  
(A turned around and looked puzzled)  
P: **Sorry**. I got the wrong person.  
A: That's ok.

Example 46 (NC/M, RS4)

P: 因为车太堵了！你知道的，因为是下午上班高峰，然后就就，反正.....我不是故意迟到的，就是车太堵，希望你能原谅！

Translation:

P: It's the traffic! You know, it's peak time, that's why. Anyway, I didn't mean to be late on purpose. It's just because of the traffic I hope you can **forgive** me.

In the current data set, NC participants used a number of IFID formulae which indicated the most conventionalized and routine apology. In Figure 4.3, a list of IFID formulas in Mandarin Chinese used by NC participants is presented.

embarrassed), this expression could also function as thanking or refusal.

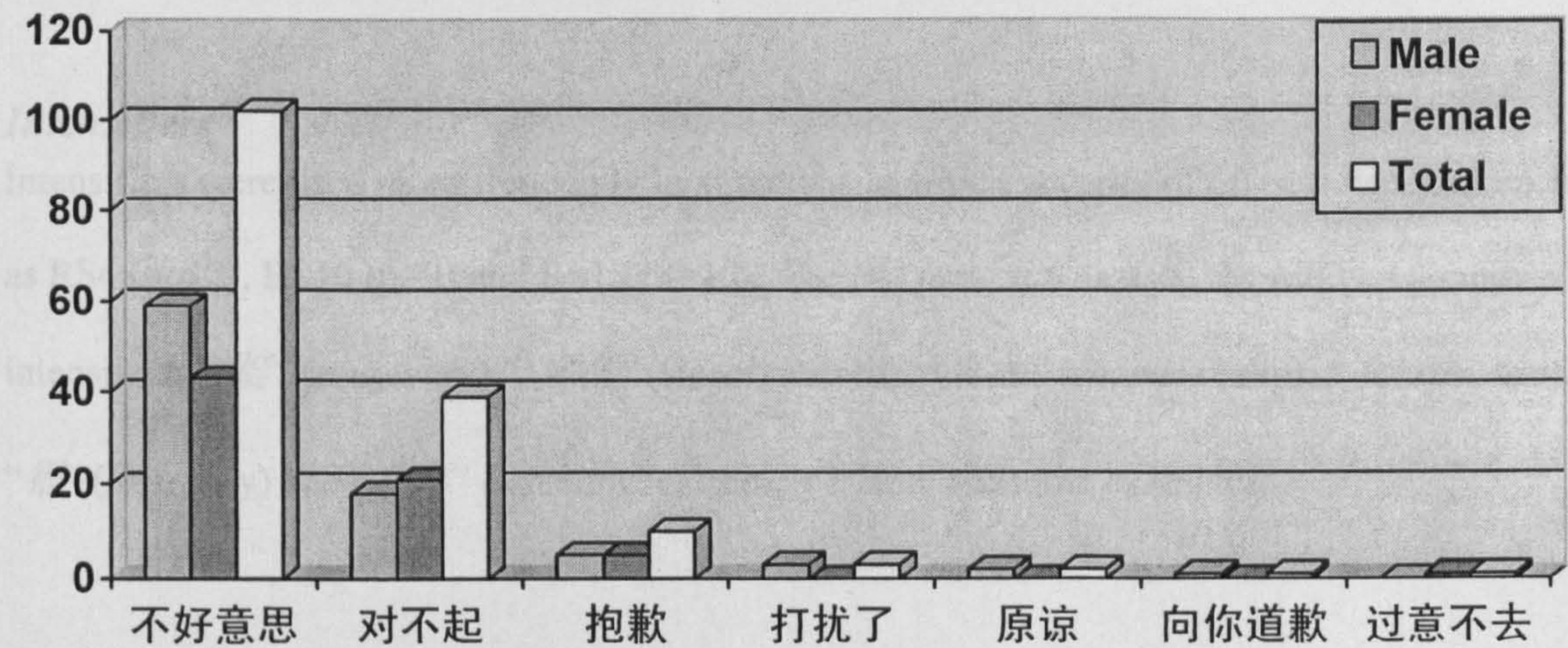


Figure 4.3 IFID formulae in the NC data

As shown in Figure 4.3, there were seven IFID formulae used by NC participants. “不好意思” (*bu hao yi si*, feeling embarrassed) was the predominant form for both male and female NC participants ( $n=102$ ). As discussed in Chapter 2, *bu hao yi si* is a colloquial form of apology. The expression itself could also be used in situations such as showing gratitude or rejection.



Therefore, it does not function as ‘apologising’ only and is a light form of apologising in spoken Chinese.

Male participants used this formula (n=59) more often than female participants (n=43). On the other hand, the word “对不起” (*dui bu qi*, sorry) was the second commonly used formula by the NC participants. This formula is directly linked with apologising and only used in apology situations (n=39). The female participants used this formula (n=21) slightly more often than male participants (N=18). The third common formula was “抱歉” (*bao qian*, to apologise), n=10. It occurred equally in male (n=5) and female (n=5) data sets. Male participants used other IFID formulae such as “打扰了” (*da rao le*, sorry for disturbing), n=3; “原谅” (*yuan liang*, forgive me), n=2; and “向你道歉” (*xiang ni dao qian*, apologise to you), n=1. However, these were not found in the female data. One female participant used an expression “过意不” (*guo yi bu qu*, feeling guilty) when apologising. Similar to “不好意思” (*bu hao yi si*, feeling embarrassed), this expression could also function as thanking or refusal.

### ***Intensifiers***

Intensifiers were used more frequently in situations in which severity of offence was high such as RS4 (n=12), RS10 (n=9) and RS12 (n=10). The NC participants used the following range of intensifiers: “挺” (*ting*, very), “实在” (*shizai*, indeed), “真的” (*zhende*, really), “太” (*tai*, too), “很” (*hen*, very) and “非常” (*feichang*, extremely). Here are some examples:

#### **Example 47 (NB/F, RS4)**

P: 这样的是吧, 实在不好意思, 耽误你们这么多时间, 因为我手机没有电了, 所以说我也很想打电话过来的, 但是人已经在车上, 我也想尽快过来, 所以就是说没有下车, 不好意思, 实在是抱歉。希望你能不能给我一次面试的机会。真的谢谢。

Translation:



P: I understand. I am **really** sorry to delay your schedule. My mobile was out of battery so I couldn't inform you. I wanted to call you but I was already on the bus. I really wanted to make it so I didn't get off the bus. Sorry. I am **really** sorry. I was wondering if you could give me a chance for the interview. Thanks a lot for that.

Example 48 (NC/M, RS10)

P: 哎呀！真不好意思！

Translation:

P: Oh, no! **Really** sorry!

***Emotional expression***

Emotional expressions were used quite often by NC participants. The most common emotional expressions were “哦” (oh), “啊” (oh), “哎呀” (oh, no) and “哎哟” (oh, no). This sub strategy was highly used in RS2 (n=11) and RS10 (n=7).

Example 49 (NC/F, RS5)

P: 啊，不好意思，不好意思！

Translation:

P: **Oh**, sorry, sorry!

Example 50 (NC/M, RS10)

P: 哎呀！对不起，我没有注意到。

Translation:

P: **Oh**, no. Sorry. I was careless.

***Double intensifier***

Double intensifiers were used only in three situations: RS2, 8 and 12.

Example 51 (NC/M, RS2)

P: 哦, 那.....抱歉! 我...我可能记错了。非常非常不好意思!

Translation:

P: Oh, er.. I apologise! Perhaps I got the time wrong. I am **extremely extremely** sorry.

***Double IFID***

'Double IFID' was not categorised in the CCSARP coding manual. It refers to situations where the speaker repeats an explicit apology formula at least twice at one time. The only situations in which this was not used by the NC participants were RS4 and RS9. It was a particular feature identified in the NC data. The NC participants used this sub-strategy to enhance the level of directness and thus increase the level of politeness and sincerity. The following are some examples.

Example 52 (NC/F, RS2)

A: 对, 我昨天等了你两个多小时, 你都没来。

P: 哦, 对不起, 对不起, 对不起, 我记错了。我以为是今天下午两点。

Translation:

A: Yes, I waited for you for over an hour yesterday and you didn't turn up

P: Oh, **sorry, sorry, sorry!** I got the wrong date. I thought it was 2 o'clock today.

Example 53 (NC/M, RS5)

P: 哦 不好意思 我以为是我的朋友, 认错人了!

A: 啊。

P: 不好意思, 不好意思!

A: 啊, 好的。

Translation:

P: Oh, sorry. I thought you were a friend. I got the wrong person.

A: Ah?

P: **Sorry, sorry!**

A: Oh, it's ok.



### *Concern for hearer*

Sub-strategy 'concern for hearer' was mainly used in RS10 (n=22). It was also used in high severity situations, such as RS11 and RS12. Example 54 and 55 show how this sub-strategy was used.

#### Example 54 (NC/M, RS10)

P: 对不起对不起！我不是故意的，我真的不是故意的！没烫着你吧！

Translation:

P: Sorry, sorry! I didn't mean it. I really didn't mean it. **I hope it didn't burn you!**

#### Example 55 (NC/F, RS10)

P: 不好意思, 不好意思, 实在很抱歉！你看有什么关系伐，帮你擦擦。

Translation:

P: Sorry, sorry, I am really sorry. **Do you think you are ok?** Let me help you clean.

## **Strategy 2 Taking on responsibility**

Table 4.14 shows how sub-strategies of 'taking on responsibility' were used by NC participants.

### *Explicit self-blame*

In RS5, 'explicit self-blame' was the only sub-strategy used by NC participants. 'Explicit self-blame' was mostly used in RS12 (n=28). It was also used frequently in RS2 (n=11) and RS5 (n=10). The NC participants didn't use this sub-strategy in the situations with light offence such as RS1, RS3, RS6 and RS8.

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
Taking on responsibility	11	31	14	40	10	14	16	23	34	24	30	46	293
Explicit self-blame	0	11	0	2	10	0	2	0	2	2	3	28	60
Implicit self-blame	5	13	5	6	0	5	4	5	24	9	14	6	96
Lack of intent	2	2	1	12	0	1	0	4	3	12	9	1	47
Expression of embarrassment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	5
Justify hearer	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Indication of effort to avoid offence	0	0	0	9	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
Refusal to acknowledge guilt	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	0	0	0	0	8
Eliciting empathy	4	5	8	10	0	4	3	12	1	0	1	8	56
Expression of self-deficiency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	3	3	8

Table 4.14 Number of times ‘taking of responsibility’ and sub-strategies used by NCs

Example 56 (NC/F, RS12)

P: 那可怎么办啊?! 都怪我! 我怎么给说错了呢? 我...你知道我不是故意的。另一篇是2个星期以后交, 我正好给它记混了!

Translation:

P: What to do now? It's my entire fault! How could I say it wrong? I.. You know I didn't mean it. It was the other essay that needed to be handed in after two weeks. I got them mixed up.

Example 57 (NC/M, RS7)

P: 哦, 是35元, 不好意思, 是我看错了!  
A: 没关系。

Translation:

P: Oh, it's 35 yuan. Sorry. It was me who got the price wrong!  
A: It's alright.

Implicit self-blame

As shown in Table 4.14, the most frequently used sub-strategy was ‘implicit self-blame’ (n=96). It was mostly used in RS9 (n=24) and in RS2 (n=13) and RS11 (n=14). No participants used this sub-strategy in RS5.



Example 58 (NC/F, RS9)

P: 完了完了, 我片子忘带了, 我真的忘了! 不好意思!

Translation:

P: No, no, I forgot to bring the DVD. I really forgot! Sorry!

Example 59 (NC/F, RS2)

A: 对, 我说好星期二下午 2 点钟的, 怎么忘了呢?

P: 这样子。。可能最近非常忙, 一下子把时间也记不清楚了!

Translation:

A: Yes, we've agreed to meet at 2pm on Tuesday. How come you forgot?

P: It's because... Maybe I am too busy recently and I got confused with the dates.

***Lack of intent***

This sub-strategy was mostly used in RS4 (n=12) and RS8 (n=12). It was also used quite frequently in RS11 (n=9). It was very common for the NC participants to use “实在” (indeed) and “真的” (really) to emphasize that they did not have bad intentions.

Example 60 (NC/M, RS4)

P: 因为车太堵了, 你知道的, 因为是下午上班高峰, 然后就就反正..... 我真的不是故意迟到的! 就是车太堵! 希望你能原谅!

Translation:

P: It's the traffic. You know it's peak time, so.. Anyway, ..., I really didn't mean to be late! It's all because of the traffic! I hope you can forgive me!

***Expression of embarrassment***

This sub-strategy was not used often by NC participants (n=5). It was only used by female NC participants. It was only used in RS8 (n=2), RS9 (n=2) and RS10 (n=1).

Example 61 (NC/F, RS8)

P: 我知道，所以说我心里也非常非常难过，但是我真得也想跟你一起去，我也等了很久了，但是今天就是突然这么多事情，我实在是处理不完。没有办法.....你看好不好？

Translation:

P: I know. I feel very very bad because of this. I really want to go with you and I have also been looking forward to it. But I suddenly have so much to do today and I really can't finish it. I don't have any other options. What do you think?

### *Justify hearer*

This sub-strategy was only used by one male NC participant in RS4.

### Example 62 (NC/M, RS4)

A: 你是今天来应聘的啊？但是我们应聘时间已经过去了。我们下午1点到3点。现在已经5点了，你迟到了整整两个小时！

P: 对，对，我知道现在我跟你怎么解释都是白费的。因为路上堵车，堵了整整2个小时！高架上轮胎半个小时才动一圈！不好意思！

Translation:

A: You are here for the interview? But we've already finished. It was from 1-3 this afternoon and now it's already 5pm. You are almost 2 hours' late!

P: Right, right, I know you may still think the same no matter how I explain to you now. It's just because of the traffic jam and it lasted for 2 hours. The wheels of the car could only turn once every 30mins! Sorry!

### *Indication of effort to avoid offence*

This sub-strategy was only used in RS4 and RS6.

### Example 63 (NC/M, RS4)

P: 我真的很抱歉！但是我已经提前1个多小时出发了，但是没想到还是堵车了。一般情况下它不会堵的，但是今天它...就是有交通事故，所以堵了。

Translation:

P: I am really sorry! But I already left home an hour earlier than planned and I didn't expect the traffic jam. Normally this wouldn't happen. But there was a traffic accident so the road was all blocked.

### *Refusal to acknowledge guilt*



It seemed that NC participants did not tend to refuse taking on responsibility. This sub-strategy was mainly used in RS7 (n=7).

#### Example 64 (NC/F, RS7)

- P: 啊？是3块吗？我刚刚看过是2块。  
A: 是3块，电脑不会错的。  
P: 是这样子的啊。那有可能价格是调整过了，你帮我看一下好伐？

Translation:

- P: Excuse me? Is it 3 yuan? I just saw the price was 2 yuan.  
A: It is 3. The computer won't be wrong.  
P: Is it so? Maybe the price has been re-adjusted. Could you take a look again?

#### *Eliciting empathy*

This was the third most frequently used sub-strategy of 'taking on responsibility' after 'implicit self-blame' and 'explicit self-blame'. It was used more often particularly in RS8 (n=12), RS4 (n=10) and RS12 (n=8). The only situations in which it was not used were RS5 and 10.

#### Example 65 (NC/M, RS4)

- P: 是不是可以给我一个机会？虽然我知道这是我的错，但是你知道上海的交通非常的非常的堵啊！

Translation:

- P: Could you give me another chance? Although I understand it's my fault, you know the traffic in Shanghai is horrible.

#### Example 66 (NC/M, RS1)

- A: 你看手机响了，影响我们上课，影响我们思路了。对你不好，对我也不好。  
P: 对，对大家都不好。我下次不会犯这种错误了！

Translation:

- A: You see when your phone went off; it disturbed our tutorial and our thoughts. It's not good for you or me.  
P: Yes, it's not good for everybody. I won't make this kind of mistake in the future.

*Expression of self-deficiency*

‘Expression of self-deficiency’ was only used in four RSs (n=8): RS8 (n=2), RS9 (n=2), RS11 (n= 3) and RS12 (n=3).

Example 67 (NC/F, RS12)

A: 啊? ! 你不是跟我说 2 个星期以后交吗?  
P: 那是另外一篇论文。我现在已经老啦糊涂啦!

Translation:

A: What? Didn’t you tell me it needed to be handed in after two weeks?  
P: It should be another essay. **I must be getting old and confused!**

**Strategy 3 Explanation or account**

Table 4.15 shows the numbers of times that the sub-strategies of ‘explanation or account’ were used in the twelve situations. Both sub-strategies were mainly used in RS4 and RS8.

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>Explanation or account</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>146</b>
Stating reason	8	7	4	30	11	8	11	31	6	1	1	4	123
Eliciting sympathy	1	3	0	6	0	0	0	15	0	0	0	0	24

**Table 4.15** Number of times ‘explanation or account’ and sub-strategies used by NCs

*Stating reason*

This sub-strategy was used often across situations and especially in RS4 (n=30) and RS8 (n=31). It was rarely used in RS10 (n=1) and RS11.

Example 68 (NC/F, RS8)

P: 我今天特别忙, 不好意思, 但是来不及去。

Translation:

P: **I am extremely busy today. I am sorry, but I don’t have time to go.**



It is worth mentioning that when NC participants provided reasons in RS1, they always mentioned that it was a call from a family member or an emergency situations involving family.

*Eliciting sympathy*

This sub-strategy was mainly used in RS8 (n=15). It was also used in RS4 (n=6), RS2 (n=3) and RS1 (n=1).

Example 69 (NC/M, RS8)

P: 不好意思，因为公司临时要加班，你也知道我工作方面还是比较重要的。让阿姨带你去吧一样的，下次我肯定补你。

Translation:

P: Sorry. It's because I have to work overtime today. You also know how work is important for me. Let your aunt take you there and it'll be just the same. I will compensate you next time.

**Strategy 4 Managing the problem:**

Four sub-strategies were identified in the NC data as shown in Table 4.16.

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>Managing the problem</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>356</b>
Offering repair/solution/suggestion	2	6	14	13	0	19	12	30	14	14	36	29	189
Being co-operative	18	29	16	5	0	17	5	12	8	0	1	16	127
Refusing to repair	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Negotiating	3	2	5	11	0	2	7	6	0	0	1	0	37

**Table 4.16** Number of times ‘managing the problem’ and sub-strategies used by NCs

*Offering repair/solution/suggestion*

The NC participants used these sub-strategies mostly in RS11 (n=36), followed by RS 8 (n=30) and RS12 (n=29). The only situation in which the NC participants didn't offer repair/solution/suggestion was RS5.

Example 70 (NC/M, RS11)

P: 我给你买一个吧！不好意思！我给你买一个吧！

Translation:

P: Let me buy you a new one! Sorry! I will buy you a new one!

Example 71 (NC/F, RS12)

A: 是啊，明天就要交，我怎么办啊？！

P: 你赶快想想吧！我正好论文也写完了，我过来帮你一起参考参考。

Translation:

A: Right, tomorrow is the deadline. What am I suppose to do?

P: You'd better start thinking about it. I've just finished mine. I will come over and help you with it.

***Being co-operative***

Differing from 'offering repair/solution/suggestion', sub-strategy 'being co-operative' refers to the speaker accepting any suggestion or request proposed by the hearer. The NC participants used it most frequently in RS2 (n=29) and then in RS1 (n=18) and thirdly in RS6 (n=17). This was the second most used sub-strategy of 'taking on responsibility'.

Example 72 (NC/F, RS2)

A: 没关系。我现在很忙，抽不出时间来帮你辅导，这样我们再约下星期时间吧！

P: 再约？好的好的好的。

Translation:

A: It's ok. I am very busy and can't have a tutorial with you. Shall we re-schedule for next week?

P: Re-schedule? Fine, fine, fine.

Example 73 (NC/M, RS6)

A: 我现在要用，你能不能今天下午我在办公室 帮我送过来？

P: 可以可以 当然可以。

Translation:

A: I need it now. Could you bring it to my office this afternoon?

P: Yes, yes, of course.



*Refuse to repair*

This sub-strategy was only used in RS7.

Example 74 (NC/F, RS7)

A: 我们价钱有调整的话电脑上会显示出来的。你要是买的话 3 块钱，您还要吗？  
P: 那我不要了。

Translation:

A: If the price is changed, it would show in the computer. If you want to buy this one, it's 3 yuan. Would you still like to have it?  
P: Then I won't take it.

*Negotiating*

'Negotiating' was mainly used in RS4 (n=11). This was not a sub-strategy which the NC participants used often.

Example 75 (NC/F, RS4)

A: 你知道我们这轮面试已经结束了，我们正在整理材料呢。  
P: 那你能不能再给我一个机会呢？  
A: 这样吧，你回去再等我们下次的面试通知好吗？这次很抱歉，确实我们结束了。  
P: 但是我今天已经过来了，能不能够给我一个机会呢？

Translation:

A: As you know, we have already finished this round of interviews. We are packing up the materials.  
P: Could you give me one more chance?  
A: Maybe you could wait for our next round interviews. I am sorry but we've finished.  
P: But I am here already today, could you please give me a chance?

**Strategy 5 Promise of forbearance**

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
Promise of forbearance	9	14	0	0	0	7	0	7	3	0	0	2	42

Table 4.17 Number of times of 'promise of forbearance' used by NCs

There was no sub-strategy identified under ‘promise of forbearance’. The NC participants used it relatively frequently in RS2 (n=14) and RS1 (n=7). The NC participants tended to use “一定” (definitely) or “肯定” (surely) when they used this sub-strategy.

Example 76 (NC/F, RS2)

P: 哦， 好的好的好的， 我以后一定记住准时到！ 不好意思！  
A: 那我们就约下个星期二的 2 点钟好吗？ 下午。  
P: 下个星期二的两点钟。  
A: 这次不要搞错了好吗？  
P: 好的， 我一定。

Translation:

P: Oh, ok, ok, ok. **I will definitely be on time in the future!** Sorry!  
A: How about next Tuesday 2pm?  
P: Next Tuesday at 2pm.  
A: Don't get the time wrong this time, OK?  
P: **Ok, I will definitely not.**

Strategy 6 Distracting from the offence

As shown in table 4.18, there are seven sub-strategies of distracting from the offence. Across all the situations, ‘task-oriented remark’ was the mostly frequently used sub-strategy and ‘making comment’ was the least frequently used by NC participants. Examples of how NC participants used each sub-strategy will be listed as follows.

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>Distracting from the offence</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>226</b>
Acting innocently	0	17	2	0	2	10	10	1	6	0	3	2	53
Task-oriented remark	4	7	1	3	0	1	4	6	5	1	3	16	61
Making comment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Invitation to hearer for suggestions	2	0	1	1	0	3	1	9	6	1	3	4	31
Switching the topic	2	5	14	4	2	2	3	4	3	0	9	7	55
Appeasing	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	18	1	0	0	6	26
Humour	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	1	8

Table 4.18 Number of times ‘distracting from the offence’ and sub-strategies used by NCs



### *Acting innocently*

This was the third most frequent sub-strategy used by the NC participants to distract the hearer from the offence. It was used particularly often in RS2 (n=17). It was also used fairly often in RS6 (n=10) and RS7 (n=10).

#### Example 77 (NC/M, RS7)

- A: 对不起，先生 2 块 5。  
P: 哎？不是标价上写 2 块的吗？  
A: 2 块 5。  
P: 是 2 块 5 吗？可能打错了，你去看一下或者我去看一下。

Translation:

- A: Sorry, sir, it's 2.5 yuan.  
P: **Really? Doesn't it say 2 yuan on the price tag?**  
A: It's 2.5 yuan.  
P: **Is it 2.5 yuan?** Maybe it was wrongly printed. You could go have a look or I can go have a look.

### *Task-oriented remark*

This was the most frequently used sub-strategy by the NC participants; it was employed to divert the hearer's attention to what should be done next. It was used most often in RS12 (n=16).

#### Example 78 (NC/F, RS12)

- P: 这样吧，反正明天就要交，我们抓紧时间吧！调整一下情绪啦！不好意思啦！

Translation:

- P: It needs to be handed in tomorrow anyhow. **So, let's hurry up! Pull yourself together! Sorry!**

#### Example 79 (NC/F, RS8)

- A: 那你说我现在怎么办吧，我都准备好啦！  
P: 你今天要不到哪儿去逛逛？！你喜欢吃什么就吃，我付钱。

Translation:

- A: I am all ready. What do you think I should now?

P: **You'd better go window shopping somewhere! If you want to eat out, just go ahead. I will pay for it.**

### ***Making comment***

NC participants did not use this sub-strategy much. It only occurred in two situations: RS9 and 11.

### ***Invitation to hearer for suggestions***

This sub-strategy was mainly used in RS8 (n=9) and RS9 (n=6). It differs from 'offering repair/solution/suggestion' since the purpose of this sub-strategy is to redirect the hearer's attention to other activities or topics instead of focusing on resolving the current situation.

#### **Example 80 (NC/M, RS9)**

P: 别看电影了！我们做些其他的，你说怎么样？总归有好玩的。

Translation:

P: Don't watch the movie then. **Shall we do something else?** There must be something fun.

### ***Switching the topic***

This was the second most frequently used sub-strategy of 'distracting from the offence' by the NC participants. It was mostly used in RS3 (n=14) followed by RS11 (n=9) and thirdly RS12 (n=7).

#### **Example 81 (NC/F, RS12)**

P: 我实在是很抱歉，我那个...唉...其实我对你印像特别好！

Translation:

P: I am really sorry. I, .. **I actually have a very good impression of you.**

#### **Example 82 (NC/M, RS3)**

P: 是吗？不好意思！本来还想邀请你参加的。既然你觉得太吵的话，我会把音量调低的。



Translation:

P: Is it? Sorry! I was **just thinking to ask you to join us**. But if you think the music is too loud, I will turn it down.

### *Appeasing*

This sub-strategy was used predominantly in RS8 (n=18). It was also used by a few NC participants in RS12 (n=6)

#### Example 83 (NC/F, RS8)

P: 我再请你吃大餐哦！

Translation:

P: I will also buy you a big meal!

### *Humour*

NC participants did not use ‘humour’ often as a strategy to distract the hearer from the offence.

It was only used in four RSs with low level of occurrence. It mainly appeared in RS11.

#### Example 84 (NC/M, RS11)

P: 不好意思！

A: 怎么办呀？

P: 不过我想 你不会残忍到要我陪你一个吧？！

A: 那真是的，怎么办啊？ 帮我修吧！

Translation:

P: Sorry!

A: What am I supposed to do?

P: **Well, I don't think you would be cruel enough to ask me to buy you one, would you?** (Laughed)

A: That's true. What to do now? Go and get it fixed for me then!

### **Strategy 7 Reassurance**

There was no sub-strategy under ‘reassurance’.

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
Reassurance	3	0	5	0	0	4	0	8	9	0	10	22	61

Table 4.19 Number of times ‘reassurance’ used by NCs

This strategy was used mainly in RS12 (n=22). It was also used relatively frequently in RS11 (n=10), RS9 (n=9) and RS8 (n=8).

Example 85 (NC/F, RS12)

A: 哦.....肯定来不及的啦！  
P: 哎呀， 应该可以来得及的吧！ 我们两个人一起！

Translation:

A: Oh, ... I definitely won't be able to make it!  
P: Come on, it should be fine! We can work together.

Example 86 (NC/M, RS8)

P: 你就体谅一下, 反正以后看电影的机会多的是！

Translation:

P: Could you just try to understand? In any case, there will be plenty of chances to go to the movies.

Example 87 (NC/M, RS12)

A: 那你跟老师说！你们都交就我一个人没交多没面子阿！  
P: 没关系的， 你是新生呀！ 反正...反正....应该老师会酌情的吧！

Translation:

A: Then you have to explain to the tutor! It's so face-losing if I am the only one who can't submit!  
P: It's ok since you are new! In any case.. in any case, the tutor should consider the circumstances.

**Strategy 8 Other strategies**

Some additional apology strategies were used by NC participants and were called ‘other strategies’ in this study. They were further coded as sub-strategies: ‘giving priority to the hearer’, ‘verifying hearer’s position’, ‘reducing pressure on hearer’, ‘compound strategy’,



‘foregrounding social relationship’ and ‘moral justification for situation’. Table 4.20 shows the numbers of times these strategies were used by the NC participants.

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
Other strategies	6	1	7	3	0	10	0	18	14	0	19	6	84
giving priority to the hearer	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	1	0	2	2	15
verifying hearer’s position	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	2	4	0	5	0	14
reducing pressure on hearer	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	5	0	17
compound strategy	0	1	0	3	0	7	0	6	0	0	5	4	26
foregrounding social relationship’	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	2	0	7
moral justification for situation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	5

Table 4.20 Number of times ‘other strategies’ used by NCs

*Giving priority to the hearer*

This sub-strategy refers to the speaker demonstrating the importance that he or she gives to the hearer so that the hearer may feel less annoyed by the offence. It was mainly used in RS1. As mentioned early on, the NC participants tended to claim that it was a call from a family member. Then, by using this strategy, the participants wanted to indicate that the hearer had the same importance as the family. In example 91, this female participant emphasized the fact that it was a call from her mother but she did not take the phone call because of the importance of this tutorial and the importance of the tutor. She did not use any explicit apology strategy. Instead, by not taking her mother’s call, she intended to indicate her lack of intent to answer the phone and her respect for the tutor.

Example 88 (NC/F, RS1)

(电话铃响了)  
P: (拿出手机, 把电话挂掉)  
A: 怎么回事?  
P: 没关系, 我妈打电话给我, 我过会儿回她好了。

Translation:

(Mobile phone went off)  
P: (Switched the phone off)  
A: What’s that?  
P: Oh, it doesn’t matter. My mum just called me and I can call her back later.

#### Example 89 (NC/M, RS8)

P: 绝对不会失约, 下次我肯定是推我们老板。

Translation:

P: I definitely won't miss our date again. **Next time, I will definitely say no to my boss.**

In the above example 89, the participant used the same sub-strategy to indicate that the hearer was more important even than his boss and if the same RS occurred in the future, he would give priority to the hearer.

#### *Verifying hearer's position*

This sub-strategy refers to situations where the speaker's intent is to find out if the hearer accepts his/her repair. In other words, the speaker wants to understand if the hearer returns 'face' to him/her. In the NC data, this sub-strategy was typically used after a few turns of negotiation. The speaker gave 'face' to the hearer by apologising and offering repair. By doing so, the participants indicated their effort to repair the situation therefore expecting the hearer to be satisfied with their apology. If the hearer was still not happy with the solution, then the hearer would be considered not to give face back to the speaker. In most situations, the hearer would be put into a difficult position by not accepting the apology. This strategy was mainly used in situations where the social distance was close, such as RS8 (n=4) and RS11 (n=5).

#### Example 90 (NC/F, RS11)

P: 噢 天哪 太不好意思了 我这个星期——我明天就去把它给修了, 我明天就去把它屏幕给换了, 保证跟原来一模一样, 好不好? 不好意思!

Translation:

P: Oh, dear! Really sorry! This week, no, tomorrow, I will go to get it fixed. I will go tomorrow to change the cover for you and I guarantee it would look the same as before. **Is that ok? Sorry!**

#### *Seeking closure of apology*

#### Example 91 (NC/M, RS9)



P: 就我错了！那我们现在一块儿出去你喜欢什么碟子我买，这总行吧？买了以后我们回来一起看正好！

Translation:

P: It's my fault. Let's now go to buy whatever DVD you like and I will pay for it. **Wouldn't this be ok with you?** After we get it, we can just come back and watch it together.

### *Reducing pressure on hearer*

This sub-strategy was only used in RS3 (n=6), RS9 (n=6) and RS11 (n=5). The NC participants used this strategy to relieve the psychological pressure on or embarrassment of the hearer regarding the request a repair or solution. In RS3, it was the speaker's birthday; therefore the hearer would feel it face-threatening to ask the speaker to lower the music, even though it was his/her right. In the other two situations, the offence occurred between two good friends. It was face threatening again for the hearer to request a repair because they were good friends and the hearer should therefore be more tolerant and forgiving. As the apologise, the NC participants used this strategy to make the hearer feel more at ease about the repair they were about to offer.

### Example 92 (NC/F, RS11)

P: 没关系，我再给你买一个吧！买个一样型号的，行吗？反正我家里也需要一个备用的，这样我拿这个给我老爸用，没事儿，反正他不在乎破了一个屏幕，反正偶尔用，我再给你买一个新的。

A: 那多不好意思啊！

P: 那没关系，反正这是我摔的吗，这是应该的！

Translation:

P: It doesn't matter. I will get you a new one! I will buy the same model, is that ok? **In any case, I will need a spare one at home. So I can now give this to my dad. Don't worry. He wouldn't mind about the broken screen. He just uses it occasionally. I will buy you a new one.**

A: That's so embarrassing!

P: **That doesn't matter. This is what I should do since I broke it.**

In example 92, by saying that her father can still use the damaged phone, the participant wanted to make the hearer feel comfortable with the fact that she would buy her a new one. Because she could at least use the other phone in exchange. In the following example 93, the

participant did not want the hearer to feel embarrassed as she interrupted his birthday party. He used the same strategy to suggest that he could still celebrate his birthday and also he made it less awkward for the hearer by saying they would like to leave anyway as it was not comfortable in the student accommodation. In this case, the hearer might not feel bad at ruining her flatmate's birthday party.

#### Example 93 (NC/M, RS3)

- A: 哦，是这样子的，我明天早上有一门考试，我现在在复习功课，然后呢我想你们是不是能够声音小一点啊？  
P: 嗯...好吧，反正声音小也一样过吧！  
A: 笑)  
P: 那就.....反正寝室里过也不舒服，我带他们到外面餐厅里去好嘞！

Translation:

- A: Oh, I have an exam early tomorrow morning and I am preparing for my exam. Could you keep your noise down?  
P: Yeah, ok. **I can celebrate my birthday without making loud noise in any case!**  
A: (Smiled)  
P: Yeah. **It's not very comfortable in the hall anyway. I will take them out to a restaurant.**

#### ***Compound strategy***

According to the existing CCSRP coding manual and speech act theory, apology strategies were coded based on each individual utterance. In other words, one utterance normally indicates one type of apology strategy. However, in the Chinese data in this study, it was found that it was common that one utterance in Chinese language could convey the function of two apology strategies. Therefore, in some situations, the NC participants used one utterance which served the functions of two apology strategies or sub-strategies. The combination of strategies varied based on the situation. It could for example be a combination of 'lack of intent' and 'explicit self-blame'; or 'offering repair' and 'IFID'. The following are some examples.

#### Example 94 (NC/M, RS12)

- P: 我不小心把它给搞错了，把时间给搞混了，真对不起！

Translation:



P: **I got it wrong accidentally. I got the time wrong. I am really sorry.**

Example 95 (NC/M, RS8)

P: 因为不想你生气，所以我特地抽空打这个电话来向你道歉。不好意思！我们改到明天好不好？

Translation:

P: **Just because I don't want to see you get upset, therefore I am trying to find this less busy moment to just call you to apologise to you. Sorry. Can we go tomorrow?**

In the above example 95, the participants used a cause sentence pattern in Chinese which expresses cause and result. By doing so, he expressed concern for the hearer, effort to avoid the offence and an explicit IFID in just one utterance.

***Foregrounding social relationship***

This sub-strategy was mainly used in close relationships. The NC participants used this strategy either stress and enhance solidarity with the hearer or to manipulate the hearer into accepting their apology due to close social distance. Examples 96 and 97 show these two opposite ways in which the NC participants manipulated social distance when apologising.

Example 96 (NC/M, RS9)

A: 那怎么办啊？  
P: 别急，我下去帮你买。  
A: 你说的哦！  
P: 朋友一场！

Translation:

A: What should we do now?  
P: Don't worry. I will go to buy one.  
A: If you say so.  
P: **We are friends!**

Example 97 (NC/M, RS8)

P: 你放心，表哥说好带你看这个电影的！  
A: 我今天是特殊情况，体谅体谅！  
A: 我都准备好了。  
P: 你哥我说的你能不信吗？话我什么时候跟你说过不兑现的？明天晚上 好吧？

Translation:

- P: **Don't worry, cousin (refers to himself) promised you to take you to see this movie.**  
A: You are lying!  
P: Today the situation is a bit extreme. Please show some understanding!  
A: I am all ready.  
P: **Can you not believe me, your cousin? When did I promise you things before but not do it? How about tomorrow night?**

### ***Moral justification for situation***

NC participants used this strategy when they offered explanation in some situations. They claimed that the reason for causing the offence was actually for the sake for the hearer.

#### **Example 98 (Example NC/M, RS9)**

- P: 因为嘛...碟片么...反正...想带给你的 但是说因为.....它那个质量不是太好 放出来疙厘疙瘩的,就是看上去也不好看。下次我再给你一部更好看的。

Translation:

- P: **I wanted to bring the DVD for you. But it's just because the quality was bad and it couldn't be played properly. Even if we could play it; it's not a good one to watch anyway. I will bring you a much better one next time.**

#### **Example 99 (NC/F, RS8)**

- P: 我今天都不知道会忙到几点钟, 我不可能一直让你等着我, 是不是?

Translation:

- P: **I don't even know when I will be finishing today. I wouldn't want to ask you to wait for me all this time, would I?**

### **4.3.2 Distribution of Each Strategy across All Situations**

In summary, the most frequent strategy used by NC participants was IFIDs (n=379), followed by 'managing the problem' (n= 356), 'taking on responsibility' (n=293), 'distracting from the offence' (n=226), 'explanation or account' (n=146), 'reassurance' (n=61) and 'promise of forbearance' (n=42). However, a range of other apology sub-strategies were identified in the



Chinese data and they were referred to as 'other strategies' (n=105). This strategy group contains apology sub-strategies which were not coded in the existing CCSARP coding manual. In terms of percentages, 83.9% of the NC participants used S4, which was the most frequently used strategy by all participants. 81.8% of the NC participants chose S1 and this was the second most frequently chosen strategy by both male (40.6%) and female (41.2%) participants. The third most frequent strategy for both male and female NC participants was S2. For female participants, they used more S5 whereas male participants used slightly more S3 and S6. Overall, there was no significant difference between NC male and female participants in terms of frequency of apology strategies or in terms of total opportunity of using any strategies. Table 4.21 shows frequency of each strategy used by the NC participants in each situation.

### ***IFIDs***

Overall, correlation analysis revealed that social power had a significant effect on the selection of IFIDs ( $r=0.291$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). All the participants decided to use IFIDs in RS1, 2, 4, 5, 8, and 10. The RS in which IFIDs were least frequently used by the NC participants (n=8, 50%) was RS9, in which the severity of offence was low and the social distance was close.

### ***Taking on responsibility***

All the NC participants used the strategy of 'taking on responsibility' in RS4, 8 and 12. RS4 and 12 were high severity contexts and the social distance was far. In RS9, even though the severity of offence was light, 93.8% of the participants used this strategy. This strategy was not used often in RS5 and 3. Only 31.3% of the participants (n=5) chose 'taking on responsibility' in RS5 and 37.5% of the participants (n=6) used it in RS3. Statistics showed that 'taking on responsibility' also correlated with the severity of the offence ( $r=0.172$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

### ***Explanation or account***

'Explanation or account' was selected with high frequency in RS4 (100%), RS5 (93.8%), RS8 (87.5%) and RS12 (87.5%). This strategy was not used very often by NC participants in some

high severity RSs such as RS2 (25%), RS10 (6.3%) and RS11 (6.3%). According to the correlation test, the selection of 'explanation or account' was found to correlate with social distance in the RSs ( $r=0.458$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

### ***Managing the problem***

'Managing the problem' was used very frequently in most RSs. It was used more frequently than IFIDs by NC participants. It was only not used in RS5. However, no correlation was found between this strategy and the contextual factors.

### ***Promise of forbearance***

NC participants employed 'promise of forbearance' on a few occasions. It was mainly used in RS1 (43.8%) and RS2 (50%). It seemed that the NC participants preferred to use this strategy when they were talking to their tutor. 25% of the participants used it in RS6. It was not used in RS3, 5, 7, 10, 11 and 12. No correlation was found between this strategy and the contextual factors.

### ***Distracting from the offence***

In the NC data, 'distracting from the offence' was not found to correlate with any contextual factors. The participants used this strategy mainly in RS2 (93.8%), RS15 (93.8%), RS9 (81.3%) and RS11 (81.35%). It was used less often in RS10 (split 12.5%) and RS7 (25.5%).

### ***Reassurance***

NC participants used 'reassurance' in RSs where more repair work was required in the RSs such as RS2, 11 and 12. No statistical correlation was found between participants' choice of this strategy and the three contextual factors.



RSs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>Apology strategies</b>												
S1. IFIDs	16 (100%)	16 (100%)	11 (68.8%)	16 (100%)	16 (100%)	12 (75%)	12 (75%)	16 (100%)	8 (50%)	16 (100%)	13 (81.3%)	14 (87.5%)
S2. Taking on responsibility	7 (43.8%)	13 (81.3%)	6 (37.5%)	16 (100%)	5 (31.3%)	10 (62.5%)	9 (56.3%)	16 (100%)	15 (93.8%)	13 (81.3%)	12 (75%)	16 (100%)
S3. Explanation or account	8 (50%)	4 (25%)	8 (50%)	16 (100%)	15 (93.8%)	8 (50%)	2 (12.5%)	14 (87.5%)	4 (25%)	1 (6.3%)	1 (6.3%)	14 (87.5%)
S4. Managing the problem	15 (93.8%)	16 (100%)	16 (100%)	16 (100%)	0	16 (100%)	13 (81.3%)	16 (100%)	13 (81.3%)	10 (62.5%)	15 (93.8%)	15 (93.8%)
S5. Promise of future forbearance	7 (43.8%)	15 (93.8%)	12 (75%)	3 (18.8%)	0	4 (25%)	0	1 (6.3%)	3 (18.8%)	0	0	0
S6. Distracting from the offence	7 (43.8%)	10 (62.5%)	10 (62.5%)	8 (50%)	10 (62.5%)	11 (68.8%)	4 (25%)	12 (75%)	13 (81.3%)	2 (12.5%)	13 (81.3%)	15 (93.8%)
S7. Reassurance	3 (18.8%)	4 (25%)	5 (31.3%)	1 (6.3%)	0	8 (50%)	0	12 (75%)	9 (56.3%)	0	7 (43.8%)	10 (62.5%)
S8. Others	6 (37.5%)	1 (6.3%)	7 (43.8%)	3 (18.8%)	0	10 (62.5%)	0	16 (100%)	16 (100%)	0	16 (100%)	6 (37.5%)

**Table 4.21** Frequency of strategy use by NC (n=16) participants across situations

### 4.3.3 Gender Differences in Strategy Use

Table 4.22 shows gender difference in strategy use by NC participants. Regarding the main strategies, there was not much difference in the choice of IFIDs, 'taking on responsibility', 'explanation or account' by the male and female NC participants. The main differences lay in the use of 'promise of forbearance' and 'reassurance'. Almost 70% of use of the strategy 'promise of forbearance' was by female participants and only about 30% by male participants. On the other hand, male participants preferred to use 'reassurance' (n=38, 62.3%) more than female participants (n=23, 37.7%). Also, male participants used 'managing the problem' (n=189, 53.1%) slightly more frequently than female participants (n=167, 46.9%), whereas female participants used 'distracting from the offence' (n=121, 53.5%) more than male participants (n=105, 46.6%). Within the sub-strategies of IFIDs, the most frequently used was IFID (44.9%), followed by 'intensifier' (19.7%), 'emotional expression' (12.9%), 'double intensifier' (11.3%), 'concern for hearer' (9.2%), 'please' (1.0%) and 'double intensifier' (0.8%). The numbers of strategies produced by the male and female NC participants were similar apart from those of 'emotional expressions'. Female participants used almost twice as many 'emotional expressions' than male participants. Only a few of the male participants used 'please'.

The second most highly used strategy was 'managing the problem' (n=356). The most frequently used sub-strategy was 'offering repair' (n=189, 53.1%) followed by 'being co-operative' (n=127, 35.7%). 'Refusing to repair' was only used three times across all situations by the male participants. Male NC participants used 'offering repair' and 'being co-operative' slightly more, whereas female NC participants used 'negotiating' more.



Participants	M (n=8)	F (n=8)	Total (n=16)
Strategy Type	Number of times apology strategies used		
<b>1. IFIDs</b>	<b>187 (49.3%)</b>	<b>192 (50.7%)</b>	<b>379 (100%)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IFID</li> <li>• Intensifying</li> <li>• Emotional expressions</li> <li>• Double intensifier</li> <li>• Please</li> <li>• Double IFID</li> <li>• Concern for hearer</li> </ul>	91(24%) 34 (8.9%) 17 (4.5%) 2 (0.5%) 4 (1%) 20 (5.3%) 19 (5%)	79 (20.9%) 41 (10. 8%) 32 (8.4%) 1 (0.3%) 0 23 (6%) 16 (4.2%)	170 (44.9%) 75 (19.7%) 49 (12.9%) 3 (0.8%) 4 (1%) 43 (11.3%) 35 (9.2%)
<b>2. Taking on responsibility</b>	<b>147 (50.1%)</b>	<b>146 (49.9%)</b>	<b>293 (100%)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicit self-blame</li> <li>• Implicit self-blame</li> <li>• Lack of intent</li> <li>• Expression of embarrassment</li> <li>• Justify hearer</li> <li>• Indication of effort to avoid offence</li> <li>• Refusal to acknowledge guilt</li> <li>• Agreeing/creating common ground</li> <li>• Expression of self-deficiency</li> </ul>	40 (13.6%) 40 (13.6%) 13 (4.4%) 0 1 (0.3%) 5 (1.7%) 7 (2.4%) 32 (10.9%) 4 (1.3%)	20 (6.8%) 56 (19.1%) 32 (10.9%) 5 (1.7%) 0 7 (2.3%) 1 (0.3%) 23 (7.8%) 4 (1.3%)	60 (20.5%) 96 (32.7%) 45 (15.3%) 5 (1.7%) 1 (0.3%) 12 (4.1%) 8 (2.7%) 56 (19.1%) 8 (2.6%)
<b>3. Explanation or account</b>	<b>76 (52.1%)</b>	<b>70 (47.9%)</b>	<b>146 (100%)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stating reason</li> <li>• Eliciting sympathy</li> </ul>	67 (45.9%) 10 (6.8%)	56 (38.3%) 14 (9.6%)	123 (84.2%) 24 (16.4%)
<b>4. Managing the problem</b>	<b>189 (53.1%)</b>	<b>167 (46.9%)</b>	<b>356 (100%)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offering repair/ solution/suggestion</li> <li>• Being co-operative</li> <li>• Refusing to repair</li> <li>• Negotiating</li> </ul>	101 (28.4%) 69 (19.4%) 3 (0.8%) 16 (4.5%)	88 (24.7%) 58 (16.3%) 0 21 (5.9%)	189 (53.1%) 127 (35.7%) 3 (0.8%) 37 (10.4%)
<b>5. Promise of forbearance</b>	<b>13 (30.9%)</b>	<b>29 (69.1%)</b>	<b>42 (100%)</b>
<b>6. Distracting from the offence</b>	<b>105 (46.6%)</b>	<b>121 (53.5%)</b>	<b>226 (100%)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acting innocently</li> <li>• Task-oriented remark</li> <li>• Making comment</li> <li>• Invitation for hear for suggestions</li> <li>• Switching the topic</li> <li>• Appear</li> <li>• Humour</li> </ul>	26 (11.5%) 22 (9.7%) 1 (0.4%) 8 (3.5%) 35 (15.5%) 6 (2.6%) 7 (3.1%)	27 (11.9%) 29 (12.8%) 1 (0.4%) 23 (10.2%) 20 (8.8%) 20 (8.8%) 1 (0.4%)	53 (23.4%) 51 (22.6%) 2 (0.8%) 31 (13.7%) 55 (24.3%) 26 (11.5%) 8 (3.5%)
<b>7. Reassurance</b>	<b>38 (62.3%)</b>	<b>23 (37.7%)</b>	<b>61 (100%)</b>
<b>8. Others</b>	<b>34 (40.5%)</b>	<b>50 (59.5%)</b>	<b>84 (100%)</b>

**Table 4.22 NC gender differences in choices of apology strategies**

‘Taking on responsibility’ was the third most frequently used strategy by NC participants. It seemed that female participants used ‘implicit self-blame’ a greater number of times (n=56) than the male participants (n=40) and the male participants used more ‘explicit self-blame’ (n=40) than the female participants (n=20). The female participants used ‘lack of intent’ (n=32) almost three times as much as male participants (n=13). Only the female participants used ‘expression of embarrassment’. However, male participants used both ‘refusal to acknowledge guilt’ and ‘creating common ground’ more than female participants.

NC participants used the strategy ‘distracting from the offence’ altogether 226 times. There were a few gender differences in terms of the use of sub-strategies. Male participants used ‘switching the topic’ and ‘humour’ more times than female participants. And female participants used ‘task-oriented task’, ‘inviting hearer for suggestion’ and ‘appeasing’ more times than male participants.

In terms of sub-strategies of ‘explanation or account’, NC participants mostly used ‘stating reason’ (n=123, 84.2%) and then ‘elicit empathy’ (n=24, 16.4%). Male participants used ‘stating reason’ (n=67) more than female participants (n= 56) and female participants used ‘elicit empathy’ (n=14) slightly more than male participants (n=10).

#### **4.3.4 Patterns of Using Explicit and Implicit Apology Strategies**

There were altogether eight patterns in the way NC participants used explicit and implicit apology strategies: 1. more than one explicit strategy with more than one implicit strategy (Es+Is); 2. more than one explicit strategy with one implicit strategy (Es+I); 3. one explicit strategy and more than one implicit strategy (E+Is); 4. one explicit strategy + one explicit strategy (E+I); 5. more than one explicit strategy (Es); 6. one explicit strategy (E); 7. more than one implicit strategy (Is) and 8. one implicit strategy (I). The frequency of these patterns used in the twelve situations is listed in Table 4.23.



The most common pattern that NC participants used was ‘Es + Is’ (36.46%), i.e. using more than one explicit strategy with more the one implicit strategy. This pattern was used particularly in situations where severity of the offence was high, for example in RS2 (n=8), RS4 (n=8), RS11 and RS10. The next most common pattern was ‘E + Is’ (27.6%), using one explicit strategy with more than one implicit strategy. This pattern was used in almost all RSs except RS10. The third most popular pattern in NC data was ‘Is’ (23.96%), in other words, only using implicit strategies. Overall, it seemed that the NC participants attributed more importance to use of different kinds of implicit strategies than to use of more explicit strategies. The situations in which ‘Es + I’ was mostly used were just RS5 (n=5) and RS10 (n=7). The other patterns were not significant in the NC data.

RSs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>Patterns of strategies</b>													
1. Es + Is	4	8	4	8	3	7	2	8	4	7	8	7	70
2. Es + I	2	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	14
3. E+ Is	8	2	6	6	6	4	6	1	3	0	4	7	53
4. E+I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
5. Es	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3
6. E	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
7. Is	1	6	6	0	0	5	6	7	9	0	4	2	46
8. I	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	192

Table 4.23 Patterns of strategies used by NC participants

There were three main patterns that appeared in the NC data as shown in Figure 4.4.

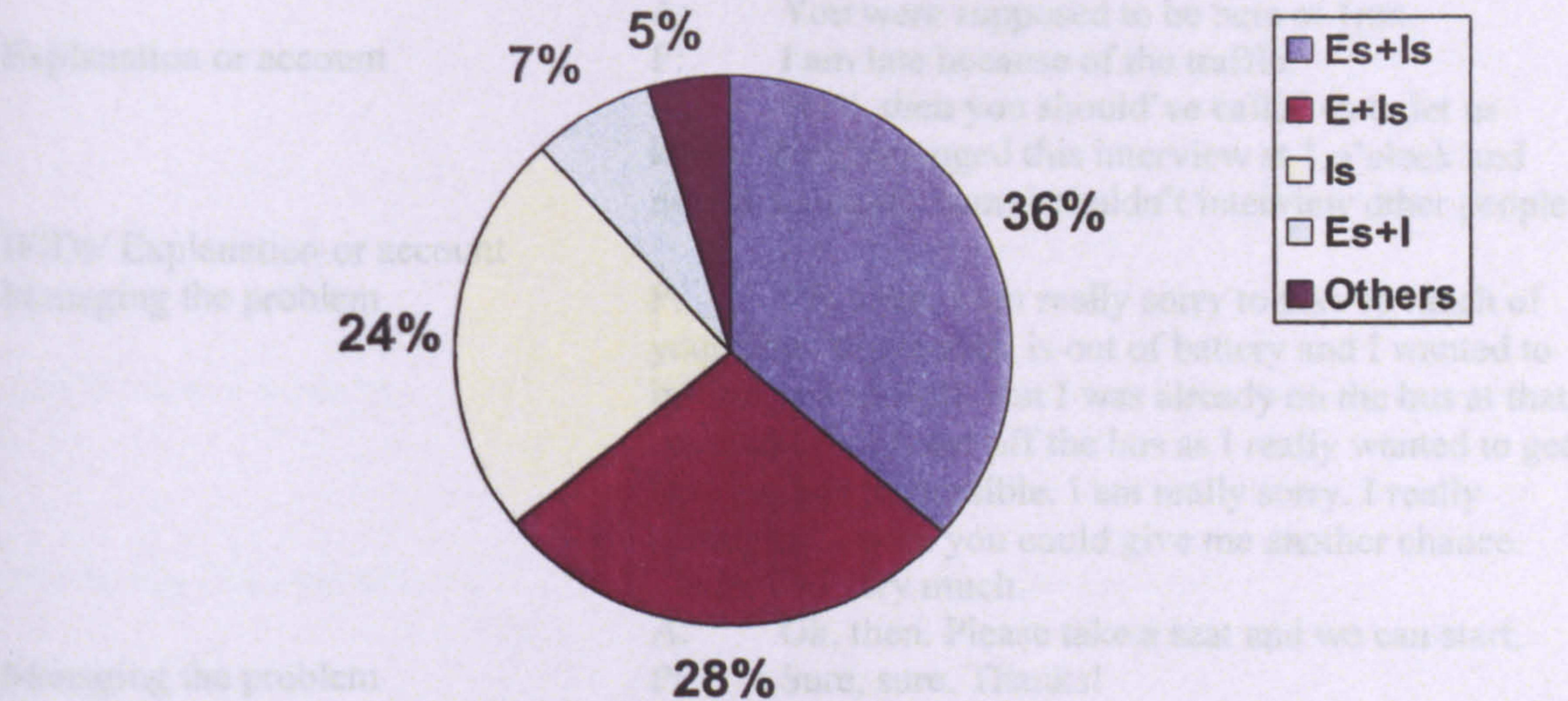


Figure 4.4 Common apology patterns used by the NCs



The following examples show the above three common patterns in the NC apologies.

**Es + Is**

Example 100 (NC/F, RS4)

IFIDs/Taking on responsibility

P: 您好！我是来面试的, 不好意思我今天迟到了, 非常抱歉!

A: 你是\*\*是吧?

P: 对! 对!

A: 应该是下午 1 点钟来的

Explanation or account

P: 因为路上特别的堵 所以说我给误点了

A: 那应该先打个电话过来阿 你知道我为了你安排在下午 1 点钟 然后现在到 3 点钟 我其他人都不能见

IFIDs/ Explanation or account  
Managing the problem

P: 这样的是吧 实在不好意思 耽误你们这么多时间, 因为我手机没有电了, 所以说我也很想打电话过来的, 但是人已经在车上 我也想尽快过来 所以说没有下车, 不好意思, 实在是抱歉! 希望你能不能给我一次面试的机会, 真的谢谢!

A: 那好吧 今天就这样 你先坐下来吧 我们先面试.

Managing the problem

P: 好的好的 谢谢

Translation:

IFIDs/Taking on responsibility

P: Hello! I am here for the interview. Sorry I am late today. I am really sorry.

A: Are you \*\*?

P: Yes, I am.

A: You were supposed to be here at 1pm.

Explanation or account

P: I am late because of the traffic.

A: Well, then you should've called us to let us know. We'd arranged this interview at 1 o'clock and now it's already 3pm. I couldn't interview other people.

IFIDs/ Explanation or account  
Managing the problem

P: Oh, I see. I am really sorry to take so much of your time. My mobile is out of battery and I wanted to inform you as well. But I was already on the bus at that time, so I didn't get off the bus as I really wanted to get here as soon as possible. I am really sorry. I really apologize. I wish you could give me another chance. Thank you very much.

A: Ok, then. Please take a seat and we can start.

Managing the problem

P: Sure, sure. Thanks!



E + Is

Example 101 (NC/M, RS12)

	P:	你好 我是**
	A:	你好, 有什么事?
	P:	我想起来一件事 你不是问我论文什么时候交吗?
	A:	对阿.
	P:	其实你问的那篇论文应该是明天交
Explanation or account	A:	啊?! 你不是跟我说 2 个星期以后交吗?
	P:	那是另外一篇论文, 我现在已经老啦糊涂啦
Distracting from the offence	A:	那怎么办啊? 我一点也没有写哎!
	P:	你一点也没有写啊?
	A:	是啊 明天就要交 我怎么办啊?
Distracting from the offence		
Managing the problem	P:	你赶快想想吧 我正好论文也写完了 我过来帮你一起参考参考
	A:	哦.....肯定来不及的啦
Reassurance	P:	哎呀 应该可以来得及的吧 我们两个人一起.....
	A:	唔
Distracting from the offence/IFID	P:	这样吧 反正明天就要交了 我们抓紧时间吧 调整一下情绪啦 不好意思啦
	A:	你到我这来吗
Managing the problem	P:	嗯 我待会就过来了
	A:	嗯 好吧

Translation:

	P:	Hello, this is **.
	A:	Hello, what's up?
	P:	I just thought of something. You asked me about when to hand in an essay, right?
	A:	Right.
	P:	In fact, the essay you asked about should be handed in tomorrow.
	A:	What? Didn't you tell me it's in two weeks' time?
Explanation or account	P:	That is another essay. I am just getting more and more confused with age.
	A:	What should I do then? I didn't write a single word.
Distracting from the offence	P:	Didn't you write anything?
	A:	No and I have to hand it in tomorrow. What am I suppose to do?
Distracting from the offence		
Managing the problem	P:	You'd better start thinking. I just finished it now and I can come over and help you with it.
	A:	Oh, I won't have enough time!

Reassurance	P: Come one, it should be ok. We are two working together.
	A: Hmmm.
Distracting from the offence/IFID	P: Ok. We have to submit tomorrow anyhow, we should stop wasting time. Get yourself in a better mood. Sorry about this.
	A: Will you come over?
Managing the problem	P: Yes, I am coming over in a short while.
	A: Ok then.

Is

Example 102 (NC/F, RS8)

	A: 喂?
	P: 喂? 表妹阿?
	A: 哦, 表姐。
	P: 我想告诉你啊, 今天晚上我们不去看电影了可以伐?
Explanation or account	A: 不是吧, 我们约好, 我正准备出门呢!
	P: 我真得太忙了!
	A: 不行!
Taking on responsibility	P: 我也很想陪你去, 我也很想看电影, 我也没有办法!
	A: 不管, 我们先约好的!
Taking on responsibility	
Managing the problem/ Distracting	P: 我们先约好的, 我下个礼拜肯定带你去! 今天晚上太忙了! 你看今天晚上天气还不好, 早点睡觉么好嘞!
	A: 不要!
Managing the problem	P: 要呀!
	A: 那你得补偿我的。
Managing the problem	P: 好的, 那下个礼拜我肯定带你去。
	A: 你说的哦!
Promise of future forbearance P:	我说的。
	A: 那下次不准失约, 那就这样。
	P: 那好, 拜拜!

Translation:

	A: Hello?
	P: Hello? Is that cousin?
	A: Hi, cousin.
	P: I want to ask you if it's ok to cancel the movie tonight.
Explanation or account	A: Oh, no, we've confirmed it. I am about to leave.
	P: I am really too busy!
	A: No way!
Taking on responsibility	P: I very much want to go with you. I want to watch that movie too but there's nothing I can do.



	A: I don't care. We've arranged everything.
Taking on responsibility	
Managing the problem/ Distracting	P: I know we've arranged it. I will definitely take you next week. I am too busy tonight. The weather's horrible today anyway, you'd better go to bed early!
	A: No!
Managing the problem	P: Yes!
	A: Well, then you have to make up to me.
Managing the problem	P: Sure, I will definitely take you next week.
	A: You promise!
Promise for future forbearance	P: I promise.
	A: Ok, don't do this again.
	P: Ok. Bye.

#### 4.3.5 Sequence of Apology Strategy Choice

In this section, the order in which strategies were used by the NC participants will be presented with a focus on the first three strategies used across all the situations and within each situation.

For most NC participants, they preferred to offer IFIDs followed by 'taking on responsibility'. Then, they used IFIDs and 'managing the problem'. 'Managing the problem' was the strategy that the NC participants focused on in the later stage of their apology. It seemed that IFIDs was important for the NC participants; however, it wasn't the main strategy overall, and it has to be combined with other strategies, particularly 'managing the problem'.

The NC participants started their apology with IFIDs in situations which were between strangers such as RS5 and RS10. In RS5, as the offence was light, IFIDs were mostly used throughout the apology. On the other hand, the offence was severe in RS10; strategies such as 'taking on responsibility' and 'managing the problem' therefore appeared towards the end of the apology. In situations where the participants were of lower status and the offence was light (such as in RS1, RS6), they opted for IFIDs to start their apology, and then followed mainly by 'managing the problem'; and they also tended to use 'promise of forbearance' to end their apology. When the participants were of lower status and the offence was severe (as in RS2 and RS4), the NCs mostly started their apology by 'taking on responsibility' and offering

‘explanation or account’. ‘Managing the problem’ was used throughout and towards the end of the above situations.

‘Distracting from the offence’ was used towards the end of an apology by the NCs in situations where the relationship was close and the offence was light (such as RS8 and RS9). Most NC participants started their apology with S1 in RS1. Then, great emphasis was given to S4. Some other strategies were used only from the 8<sup>th</sup> strategy onwards.

The participants chose ‘taking on responsibility’ at the beginning of their apology when they considered the offence as severe, such as RS2, RS4, RS10 and RS12. They used this strategy again towards the end of their apology to reinforce their recognition of fault.



RSs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Order	Most frequently used apology strategy at each order in situations											
1 <sup>st</sup>	IFIDs	Distracting from the offence	Managing the problem	IFIDs	IFIDs	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility
2 <sup>nd</sup>	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility	Distracting from the offence	Explanation or account	IFIDs	IFIDs	Explanation or account	Explanation or account	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility	Managing the problem	Explanation or account	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs
4 <sup>th</sup>	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Explanation or account	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility
5 <sup>th</sup>	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility	Explanation or account	Reassurance	IFIDs	Managing the problem	IFIDs
6 <sup>th</sup>	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility
7 <sup>th</sup>	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Managing the problem		Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Explanation or account	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility	Managing the problem
8 <sup>th</sup>	Promise of forbearance	Taking on responsibility	Managing the problem	Explanation or account		Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility	Distracting from the offence	Distracting from the offence	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility	Managing the problem
9 <sup>th</sup>	Taking on responsibility	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility	Managing the problem		Promise of forbearance	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	Explanation or account
10 <sup>th</sup>	Reassurance	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility		Managing the problem		Distracting from the offence	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Explanation or account

Table 4.24 Preferred strategy orders by the NC participants across situations

4.4 Chinese Learners of English

4.4.1 Use of Strategies and Sub-strategies

Strategy 1 Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
IFIDs	36	33	45	25	14	34	12	30	20	59	47	33	388
IFID	10	18	21	14	2	22	12	16	8	10	20	16	169
Intensifying	15	7	12	9	5	6	0	12	4	16	21	17	124
Emotional express	11	5	12	2	7	3	0	0	6	10	6	0	62
Double intensifier	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Please	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Expression marked for register	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Concern for hearer	0	3	0	0	0	3	0	2	2	23	0	0	33

Table 4.25 Number of times ‘IFIDs’ and sub-strategies used by CESLs

IFID

As mentioned in the previous section, ‘IFID’ was one of the most frequent sub-strategies of ‘IFIDs’ that the CESL participants used across all the situations. It was used particularly frequently in RS6 (n=22), RS3 (n=21) and RS11 (n=20). It was used least in RS5. Examples are shown as follows. In all the examples, A. refers to the assistant and P refers to the participant.

Example 102 (CESL/F, RS6)

A: You borrowed a book from me two weeks ago and you said you would bring it back on Monday?  
P: oh? I’m sorry. Yeah, yeah, I’m I’m sorry.

In the current data set, the CESL participants used a number of IFID formulae for the most conventionalized and routine of apologies. In Figure 4.5, a list of English IFID formulae used by the CESL participants is presented. The figures refer to the number of occurrences of entire strategy formulae in the data. In the majority of circumstances, there was one type of IFID formulae per situation; if there were more, different IFID formulae within the same situations



were counted individually, while the repetition of the same formulae was considered as a single occurrence.

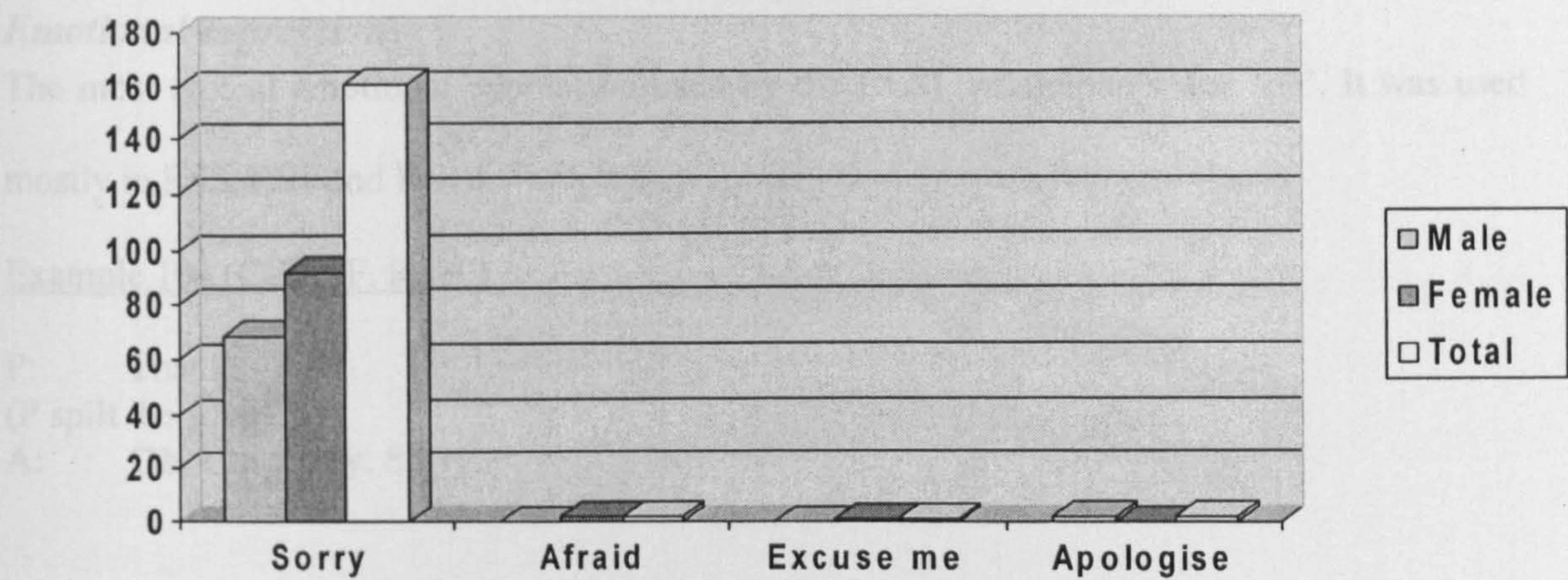


Figure 4.5 IFID formulae in CESL data

As shown in Figure 4.5, there were also four ‘IFID’ formulae used by the CESL participants when compared to the NB participants. “Sorry” was the predominant form for both male and female CESL participants. Other formulae were only used once or twice. Only male participants used “apologize” (n=2) and female participants used “afraid” (n=2) and “excuse me” (n=1).

Intensifying

‘Intensifying’ was also used frequently by the CESL participants. It was used more often in the following situations where severity of offence was higher: RS10, 11 and 12. However, it was not used as frequently in RS2 and RS4 in which the severity of offence was high as well. The most common intensifiers used by the CESL participants were “so”. Other intensifiers mentioned were “really”, “very” and “terribly”. However, occurrence of these intensifiers was low.

Example 103 (CESL/M, RS1)

P: Oh, oh. Oh. Sorry.  
A: Is that your mobile?



P: Yeah, yeah. Maybe. I'm so sorry.  
A: Right. You should always switch your mobile off when you have a tutorial or a meeting.

### Emotional expressions

The most typical emotional expression used by the CESL participants was ‘oh’. It was used mostly in RS3, RS1 and RS10.

#### Example 104 (CESL/F, RS10)

P: Thanks.  
(P spilt the soup)  
A: Oh, I'm sorry. Sorry.

### Concern for hearer

This sub-strategy was mainly used in RS10.

#### Example 105 (CESL/M, RS10)

P: Sorry. Are you ok?  
A: Yeah, it will be ok.  
P: Are you ok?  
A: Yeah, I will bring you more soup. You sit down and enjoy your meal.  
P: Ok. Are you sure?  
A: Yeah. I'm fine. Thank you.

## Strategy 2 Taking on responsibility

Out of the nine sub-strategies, only six were identified in the CESL data.

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>Taking on responsibility</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>136</b>
Explicit self-blame	3	9	0	0	4	0	0	0	2	0	2	19	39
Implicit self-blame	7	6	0	6	4	5	0	1	13	0	0	5	47
Lack of intent	0	0	9	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	16
Expression of embarrassment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Justify hearer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indication of effort to avoid offence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Refusal to acknowledge guilt	0	2	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Eliciting empathy	8	0	3	3	0	2	0	10	0	0	0	0	26
Expression of self-deficiency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Table 4.26** Number of times ‘taking of responsibility’ and sub-strategy used by CESL s



### *Explicit self-blame*

This sub-strategy was the second most frequently used. It was used very frequently by the participants in RS12 (n=19). It was also used relatively often in RS2 (n=9).

#### Example 106 (CESL/F, RS12)

- A: Hi, how are you?  
P: I'm so sorry. **I just want to tell you I made a mistake. Ah, I told you the wrong date for the deadline of the essay.**  
A: Ah, I thought it's two week's time.

### *Implicit self-blame*

This sub-strategy was the most frequently used by the CESL. It was mainly used in RS9 (n=13).

#### Example 107 (CESL/F, RS9)

- A: Did you bring the DVD?  
P: En? Oh, sorry. **I completely forgot that.** I thought... Oh, sorry.

### *Lack of intent*

This sub-strategy was mainly used by the CESL participants in RS3 (n=9) and RS4 (n=3).

#### Example 108 (CESL/M, RS3)

- A: Hi, I am trying to sleep. I have an exam tomorrow morning and it's midnight already.. ... and the music is really loud.  
P: Oh, it's midnight? Oh, sorry! **I didn't realize it's midnight!**

### *Expression of embarrassment*

This sub-strategy was used only in RS12 by a female participant.

#### Example 108 (CESL/F, RS12)

- A: h! I really just started working on it! Oh, no!  
P: **I don't know what to do.** It's just my fault. It's all my fault. Do you think, ah, is it possible for me to speak to the tutor, to explain it....

A: Yeah. Maybe we both go to the tutor together and explain what happened, and he might give me an extension?

### ***Refusal to acknowledge guilt***

There were situations in which the CESL participants explicitly denied that they were in any way responsible for the offence. This was mainly in RS5, where the participants did not think they had recognised the wrong person; but also in RS2, where they believed they had got the right time for the tutorial.

#### **Example 109 (CESL/F, RS5)**

P: Hey, Jenny. Hi.  
A: I think you got the wrong person. I'm not Jenny. Sorry.  
P: Yeah, don't you remember we met the other night at a party?  
A: No, I really think you got the wrong person.  
P: **No. I don't think so. Eh, you were drunk!**  
A: No, no, no! My name is not Jenny though. I'm Crystal. I'm sorry. I think you got the wrong person.  
P: Oh, really? Oh, sorry. Sorry about that.

### ***Eliciting empathy***

This sub-strategy was the third most commonly used sub-strategy of 'taking on responsibility' by the CESL participants. It was used in a number of situations, with relatively high occurrence in RS8 (n=10) and RS1 (n=8).

#### **Example 110 (CESL/M, RS8)**

P: I'm fine at the moment. But I'm sorry that I promised to take you to the movie but I'm afraid I can't go. I'm really sorry.  
A: Oh, no. I'm really looking forward to it.  
P: **Yeah I know.** I'm really busy these days. Is that ok? I'm very sorry.  
A: Ok, maybe we can go on another days.

### **Strategy 3 Explanation or account**

Mainly, the CESL participants used sub-strategy 'stating reason' (n=93). It was mostly used in RS4 (n=25) and 8 (n=17). 'Eliciting sympathy' was only used a couple of times in RS3 and RS4.



Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>Explanation or account</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>95</b>
Stating reason	7	11	3	25	11	7	3	17	4	0	2	3	93
Eliciting sympathy	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

**Table 4.27** Number of times ‘explanation or account’ and sub-strategies used by CESLs

*Stating reason*

Example 111 (CESL/M, RS8)

- A: Hi. How are you?  
P: Fine, but I am just really really busy because I suddenly noticed that my exam is on tomorrow not the day after tomorrow.  
A: Oh, no. Does that mean you can’t go out to see a movie with me tonight?

*Eliciting sympathy*

Example 112 (CESL/F, RS3)

- P: Oh, I’m really sorry. But today is my birthday, you know, Crystal?

**Strategy 4 Managing the problem**

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>Managing the problem</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>250</b>
Offering repair/solution/suggestion	3	16	6	10	0	6	13	18	8	11	25	24	140
Being co-operative	7	18	13	8	0	14	0	9	10	0	5	16	100
Refusing to repair	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Negotiating	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	7

**Table 4.28** Number of times ‘managing the problem’ and sub-strategies used by CESLs

*Offer of repair/solution/suggestion*

This sub-strategy was the mostly commonly used sub-strategy across situations. It was particularly frequent in high severe situations such as RS11 (n=25) and RS12 (n=24). It was also used more often in close relationships such as RS8 (n=18).

Example 113 (CESL/F, RS11)

- P: Sorry. Oh, the screen is all broken, I am afraid. But anyway, don’t worry. I will pay you the money.

- A: Right. I think I've got insurance and I will check it out and I will let you know. But I think I've got it covered.
- P: Ok. Don't worry. **I will give you full compensation.** I promise.

### ***Being cooperative***

'Being cooperative' was the second most frequently used sub-strategy. The CESL participants used it more frequently in situations where there was power difference, such as RS6 (n=14) and RS2 (n=18).

#### Example 114 (CESL/M, RS6)

- A: Right. I really need it at the moment. So I've got to have it back.
- P: Ok. So during sometime today, I can bring the book.
- A: Yeah, yeah, as soon as possible please.
- P: **Ok, ok, I will go to get it now then.**

### ***Refusing to repair***

A few male CESL participants used 'refusing to repair' (n=3), however, only in situations when they were of higher status. For example:

#### Example 115 (CESL/M, RS3)

- A: Your music is disturbing me a bit.
- P: Today is my birthday.
- A: Yeah, it's like just gone past midnight. And I've got an exam really early in the morning.
- P: **We can't stop. Sorry.**

### ***Negotiating***

The CESL participants did not employ many 'negotiating' sub-strategies. This strategy was used mainly in RS4 (n=5) and RS9 (n=2). It was also mainly used by male participants.

#### Example 116 (CESL/M, RS4)

- A: So if you won't mind waiting in the waiting room, we will call you when we've got a space for an interview.
- P: **So you mean I can't do it now?**
- A: No, because you are so late. Now someone else has been booked in. If you won't mind waiting, we will call you when we got a space.



P:        So, could you guarantee that I get this interview today?

Strategy 5 Promise of forbearance

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
Promise of forbearance	3	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	3	0	0	0	11

Table 4.29 Number of times ‘promise of forbearance’ used by CESLs

This strategy was not chosen frequently by the CESL participants. It seemed that the CESL participants used it when apologising to people with higher status such as in RS1 and RS6. They also used it in close relationships such as between friends as in RS9.

Example 117 (CESL/M, RS9)

A:        Maybe we can watch next time? Maybe you can bring it around next time?  
P:        Eah, maybe when we meet next time. **I should definitely remember.**

Strategy 6 Distracting from the offence

As shown in Table 4.30, there are seven sub-strategies of distracting from the offence. Across all the situations, ‘acting innocently’ was the mostly frequently used sub-strategy and ‘appeasing’ as well as ‘invitation to hearer for suggestions’ were the least frequently used sub-strategies by the CESL participants.

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
Distracting from the offence	6	9	4	2	12	4	0	5	11	1	16	10	80
Acting innocently	4	6	3	2	10	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	27
Task-oriented remark	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	6	14
Making comment	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	3	0	4	1	14
Invitation to hearer for suggestions	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3
Switching the topic	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	6	3	15
Appeasing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
Humour	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	4

Table 4.30 Number of times ‘distracting from the offence’ and sub-strategies used by CESLs

### *Acting innocently*

This sub-strategy was used most frequently in RS5 (n=10). It was also used relatively often in RS2 (n=6).

#### Example 118 (CESL/M, RS2)

- A: Your tutorial is supposed to be this time but yesterday, not today.  
P: Oh, really?

### *Task-oriented remark*

As mentioned already, the participants tried to make light of their offence by diverting the hearer's attention from the past (the offence) to the future (what needs to be done now) by using this sub-strategy. The CESL participants used this sub-strategy mainly in RS12 (n=6).

#### Example 119 (CESL/F, RS12)

- A: No, I haven't even started.  
P: I am sorry about it. **You have to finish and do it now.**

### *Making comments*

Some participants, especially female, tended to make comments on the RS to distract the hearer's attention away from the offence or to create solidarity with the hearer. This sub-strategy was not used frequently over all.

#### Example 120 (CESL/F, RS6)

- P: Oh, I know. **I like it very much. And, I made so many notes.**

### *Invitation to hearer for suggestions*

This sub-strategy was only used in RS2 (n=1) and RS11 (n=2) by small number of participants.

#### Example 121 (CESL/F, RS11)

- A: It's ok. Don't worry. Those things happen.  
P: **Maybe we can call Jenny again to see whether you can still use it. What do you think?**



### *Switching the topic*

'Switching the topic' was the second most frequently used sub-strategy of 'distracting from the offence'. It was used by the CESL participants mainly in RS11 (n=6), RS9 (n=3) and RS12 (n=3)

#### Example 122 (CESL/M, RS12)

- P: Yeah, I can lend you some books.  
A: That will be very good because I haven't started reading anything yet.  
P: **I think I just have a three day loan from the library so you have to renew it. So I can return my books to the library and you can borrow it again. The books are helpful.**

### *Appeasing*

'Appeasing' was only used by female CESL participants in RS8.

#### Example 123 (CESL/F, RS8)

- A: Oh, that's ok. I understand you've got a lot to work on. Maybe we can do it another day?  
P: **Ok. No problem. I will buy you a toy for the compensation.**

### *Humour*

'Humour' was used as a sub-strategy to pacify the hearer. It was mainly used in RS5 (n=2) and RS11 (n=2). It was used only by male participants.

#### Example 124 (CESL/M, RS5)

- A: No, I have never seen you before.  
P: (Laugh)  
A: (Laugh)  
P: **No problem. We can make friends again.**

## **Strategy 7 Reassurance**

There was no sub-strategy under 'reassurance'.

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
Reassurance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	4	0	9

**Table 4.31** Number of times ‘reassurance’ used by CESLs

Participants used this strategy to either guarantee a repair would be delivered or to comfort the hearer by ensuring the situation was under control. It was only used in RS8 and RS11.

Example 125 (CESL/M, RS11)

- A: I think my insurance should cover it actually. So, I shall check with my insurance company and let you know. But it should be ok.  
P: If it’s not ok, let me know, ok? Don’t worry. I will take care of it.

**4.4.2 Distribution of Each Strategy across All Situations**

Overall, the most frequent strategy used by CESL participants was IFIDs (n=390), followed by ‘managing the problem’ (n=250), ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=136), ‘explanation or account’ (n=95), ‘distracting from apology’ (n=80), ‘promise of future forbearance’ (n=11), ‘reassurance’ (n=9) and ‘others’ (n=2).

Across all the twelve situations, the most used strategy by the CESL was S1 (n=163), followed by S4 (n=147), S2 (n=100), S3 (n=73), S6 (n=67), S5 (n=11), S7 (n=7) and S8 (n=2). The strategy selected most by male participants was S4 (75%) and secondly S1 (73.9%). S2 was the third most selected strategy by the male participants (53.1%). For female participants, S1 was the most used strategy, in 95.8% of the total opportunities. The second most frequently used strategy by the female participants was S4 (78.1%) and then S2 (51%). The male participants preferred S3 to S6, whereas the female participants showed an opposite tendency. Table 4.32 shows the frequency of each strategy used by CESLs.



### ***IFIDs***

Overall, correlation analysis revealed that severity of offence ( $r=0.243$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) as well as social distance ( $r=0.168$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) had a significant effect on the selection of IFIDs. As shown in Table 4.41, all the CESL participants used IFIDs in RS1, 10, 11 and 12, in which either high severity contexts or far social distance were involved. The RS in which IFIDs were least frequently used by the CESL participants ( $n=11$ , 68.8%) was RS2.

### ***Taking on responsibility***

Almost all the CESL participants ( $n=15$ , 93.8%) used the strategy 'taking on responsibility' in RS12. 87.5% of the participants also used this strategy in RS9. No participants chose 'taking on responsibility' in RS7 and 10. This strategy was also used less frequently by the CESL participants in RS11 ( $n=2$ ). Statistical analysis showed that 'taking on responsibility' was correlated with social distance ( $r=-0.207$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

### ***Explanation or account***

'Explanation or account' was selected by all the CESL participants in RS4 and 8. 50% of the participants also used it in RS2. This strategy was not otherwise used very often by the CESL participants. The correlation test found that it was correlated with social power ( $r=-.326$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) as well as social distance ( $r=-.280$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

### ***Managing the problem***

'Managing the problem' was the second most frequently used strategy after IFIDs. With the exception of RS5, this strategy was used in the rest of RSs. It was used by all the CESL participants in RS2, 3, 8 and 11. Negative correlation was found between this strategy and the social power ( $r=-.179$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

RSs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>Apology strategies</b>												
S1. IFIDs	16 (100%)	10 (62.5%)	14 (87.5%)	14 (87.5%)	11 (68.8%)	12 (75%)	12 (75%)	16 (100%)	14 (87.5%)	16 (100%)	16 (100%)	16 (100%)
S2. Taking on responsibility	12 (75%)	12 (75%)	9 (56.3%)	8 (50%)	11 (68.8%)	7 (43.8%)	0	10 (62.5%)	14 (87.5%)	0	2 (12.5%)	15 (93.8%)
S3. Explanation or account	5 (31.3%)	8 (50%)	4 (25%)	16 (100%)	7 (43.8%)	5 (31.3%)	3 (18.3%)	16 (100%)	4 (25%)	0	2 (12.5%)	3 (18.3%)
S4. Managing the problem	8 (50%)	16 (100%)	16 (100%)	15 (93.8%)	0	11 (68.8%)	12 (75%)	16 (100%)	13 (81.3%)	9 (56.3%)	16 (100%)	15 (93.8%)
S5. Promise of future forbearance	3 (18.3%)	0	0	4 (25%)	0	0	0	1 (6.3%)	3 (18.3%)	0	0	0
S6. Distracting from the offence	5 (31.3%)	8 (50%)	4 (25%)	2 (12.5%)	9 (56.3%)	4 (25%)	0	5 (31.3%)	8 (50%)	1 (6.3%)	12 (75%)	9 (56.3%)
S7. Reassurance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5 (31.3%)	0	0	0	2 (12.5%)
S8. Others	1 (6.3%)	0	0	1 (6.3%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4.32 Frequency of strategy use by CESL (n=16) participants across situations



### ***Promise of future forbearance***

The CESL participants employed 'promise of future forbearance' only in the following situations: RS1 (n=3), RS6 (n=4), RS8 (n=1) and RS9 (n=3). No correlation was found between the contextual factors and participants' choice of this strategy in the correlation test.

### ***Distracting from the offence***

In the CESL data, 'distracting from the offence' was not found to be correlated with any contextual factors. The CESL participants used this strategy most frequently in RS11 (n=12). This strategy was used least in RS7 (n=0), RS10 (n=1) and RS4 (n=2).

### ***Reassurance***

The CESL participants used 'reassurance' in only two situations: RS8 (n=8) and RS 12 (n=2). It was found to correlate with social power ( $r=-1.000$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and severity of offence ( $r=1.000$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

### ***Others***

Other strategies were only used by female participants in RS1 (n=1) and RS4 (n=1).

## **4.4.3 Gender Differences in Strategy Use**

As can be seen in Table 4.33, in terms of 'IFIDs', the CESL participants mainly used 'IFID' (n=169) and 'intensifiers' (n=124). Overall, female participants produced about 60% of the number of times of IFIDs strategies were used. Sub-strategy 'IFID' was used significantly more times by the female participants (n=127) than the male participants (n=42). It was also the main sub-strategy used by female participants. However, the more often used sub-strategy by male participants was 'intensifiers' which took up to 40% of the total numbers of times that 'IFIDs' was used. 'Emotional expressions' was used almost equally by male and female

participants (n=62). 'Concern for hearer' was used 33 times. No CESL participants used sub-strategy 'please', 'double intensifier' and 'expression marked for register'.

When the CESL participants tried to manage the problem, both male and female participants followed a similar pattern, which was to offer repair or suggestion most frequently, followed by sub-strategies 'being co-operative'. These two sub-strategies took up to 95% of the total number of the strategy 'manage problem'. However, male participants used 'offering repair' (n=80) and 'being cooperative' a greater number of times (n=56) than female participants. Only the male participants used sub-strategy 'refusal to repair' (n=3). In the case of the strategy 'taking on responsibility', the most frequently used sub-strategy was 'implicit self-blame' (n=47, 34.6%) and then 'explicit self-blame' (n=39, 28.7%). 'Implicit self-blame' was used more often by male participants, whereas 'explicit self-blame' was used more often by female participants. The CESL participants also used 'eliciting empathy' (n=26, 19.1%), 'lack of intent' (n=16, 11.8%) and a small number of occurrences of 'refusal to acknowledge guilt' (n=7, 5.1%). The male participants produced the above three sub-strategies a greater number of times than the female.

Examining sub-strategies within 'distracting from the offence', the most frequently used was 'acting innocently' (n=27) as well as 'switch the topic' (n=15). These were used in nearly equal numbers by female and male participants. Sub-strategy 'making comment' was mainly used by female participants (n=12). 'Appeasing' was only used by female participants (n=3) but 'humour' on the other hand was only used by male participants (n=4).

'Promise of future forbearance' was mainly used by female participants (n=8, 72.7%) and 'reassurance' was only used by male participants (n=9, 100%).



Participants	M (n=8)	F (n=8)	Total (n=16)
Strategy Type	Number of times apology strategies used		
<b>1. IFIDs</b>	<b>153 (39.7%)</b>	<b>235 (60.3%)</b>	<b>388 (100%)</b>
• IFID	42 (27.1%)	127 (54%)	169 (43.3%)
• Intensifiers	62 (40%)	62 (26.4%)	124 (31.8%)
• Emotional expressions	30 (19.3%)	32 (13.6%)	62 (15.9%)
• Double intensifier	0	0	0
• Please	0	0	0
• Expression marked for register	0	0	0
• Concern for hearer	19 (12.2%)	14 (5.9%)	33 (8.5%)
<b>2. Taking on responsibility</b>	<b>76 (55.9%)</b>	<b>60 (44.1%)</b>	<b>136 (100%)</b>
• Explicit self-blame	16 (21%)	23 (38.3%)	39 (28.7%)
• Implicit self-blame	26 (34.2%)	21 (35%)	47 (34.6%)
• Lack of intent	12 (15.8%)	4 (6.7%)	16 (11.8%)
• Expression of embarrassment	0	1 (1.7%)	1 (0.07%)
• Justify hearer	0	0	0
• Indication of effort to avoid offence	0	0	0
• Refusal to acknowledge guilt	6 (7.9%)	1 (1.7%)	7 (5.1%)
• Agreeing/creating common ground	16 (21%)	10 (16.7%)	26 (19.1%)
• Expression of self-deficiency	0	0	0
<b>3. Explanation or account</b>	<b>54 (56.8%)</b>	<b>41 (43.2%)</b>	<b>95 (100%)</b>
• Stating reason	54 (100%)	39 (95.1%)	93 (97.9%)
• Eliciting sympathy	0	2 (4.9%)	2 (2.1%)
<b>4. Managing the problem</b>	<b>145 (56.9%)</b>	<b>105 (43.1%)</b>	<b>250 (100%)</b>
• Offering repair/solution/suggestion	80 (55.2%)	60 (57.1%)	140 (54.9%)
• Being co-operative	56 (38.6%)	44 (41.9%)	100 (40%)
• Refusing to repair	3 (2.1%)	0	3 (1.2%)
• Negotiating	6 (4.1%)	1 (1.0%)	7 (2.7%)
<b>5. Promise of forbearance</b>	<b>3 (27.3%)</b>	<b>8 (72.7%)</b>	<b>11 (100%)</b>
<b>6. Distracting from the offence</b>	<b>37 (46.3%)</b>	<b>43 (53.7%)</b>	<b>80 (100%)</b>
• Acting innocently	13 (35.1%)	14 (32.5%)	27 (33.8%)
• Task-oriented remark	8 (21.6%)	6 (13.9%)	14 (17.5%)
• Making comment	2 (5.4%)	12 (27.9%)	14 (17.5%)
• Invitation for hearer for suggestions	2 (5.4%)	1 (2.3%)	3 (3.7%)
• Switching the topic	8 (21.6%)	7 (16.3%)	15 (18.8%)
• Appear	0	3 (6.9%)	3 (3.7%)
• Humour	4 (10.8%)	0	4 (5.0%)
<b>7. Reassurance</b>	<b>9 (100%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9 (100%)</b>
<b>8. Others</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2 (100%)</b>	<b>2 (100%)</b>

**Table 4.33 CESL gender differences in choices of apology strategies**

4.4.4 Patterns of Using Explicit and Implicit Apology Strategies

There were altogether eight patterns in the way CESL participants using explicit and implicit apology strategies: 1. more than one explicit strategy with more than one implicit strategy (Es+Is); 2. more than one explicit strategy with one implicit strategy (Es+I); 3. one explicit strategy and more than one implicit strategy (E+Is); 4. one explicit strategy + one explicit strategy (E+I); 5. more than one explicit strategy (Es); 6. one explicit strategy (E); 7. more than one implicit strategy (Is) and 8. one implicit strategy (I). These patterns were listed in Table 4.34.

RSs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>Patterns of strategies</b>													
1. Es + Is	12	7	9	8	3	9	0	10	3	10	16	8	95
2. Es + I	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
3. E+ Is	3	2	3	4	1	0	0	4	11	0	0	6	34
4. E+I	1	0	0	0	9	3	9	0	0	0	0	0	22
5. Es	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	6
6. E	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	5
7. Is	0	7	2	4	2	4	0	2	2	0	0	2	25
8. I	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	4
Total	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	192

Table 4.34 Patterns of strategies used by CESL participants

As can be seen in Figure 4.6, ‘Es + Is’ was the most common pattern (49.48%) used by the CESL participants over all the situations. In RS11, all the participants used this pattern. It was also used frequently in RS1, 8 and 10. The next most common pattern was ‘E + Is’ (17.71%) and it was used mainly in RS9 and RS12. ‘Is’ was the third most common pattern (12.82%) and was mainly used in RS2. ‘E+I’ (11.46%) was used mostly in RS5 and RS7. The other patterns were not significant in the CESL data.



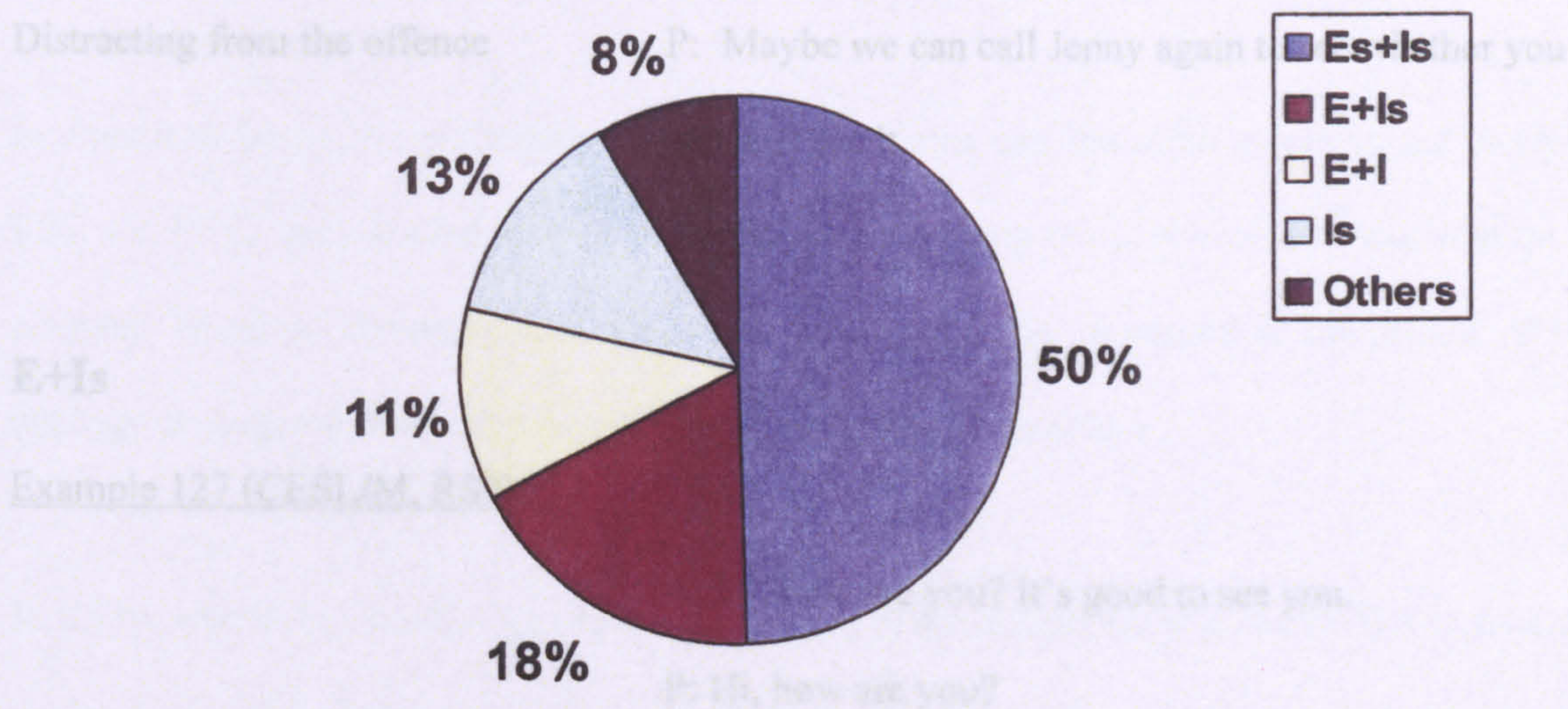


Figure 4.6 Common apology patterns used by the CESLs

Examples 126 and example 127 show the most frequent patterns found in CESL data.

**Es + Is**

Example 126 (CESL/ M, RS11)

IFID/Distracting from the offence

Managing the problem

IFID

P: Oh.

A: Oh. Is it ok?

P: The screen is probably bro (.) broken.

A: yeah. Dear!

P: Oh, I'm so sorry. Have you got insurance?

A: Yeah. I think I got insurance and I think the insurance will cover it. So I will ring the insurance company and let you know. But I think it will be ok.

P: Yeah, if you cannot claim it , I can pay. I can repair it for you or something like that.

A: Thanks. I really appreciate that. I will let you know what the insurance company say.

P: Ok, ok. I am so sorry.

A: It's ok. Don't worry, these things happen.



Distracting from the offence

P: Maybe we can call Jenny again to see whether you can still use it.

A: Ok.

## **E+Is**

### Example 127 (CESL/M, RS9)

A: Hi, how are you? It's good to see you.

P: Hi, how are you?

A: I'm ok. Did you bring the DVD around that you said you would bring?

P: DVD...Oh, my god! DVD!

A: Oh, no! Did you forget?

Taking on responsibility/distracting  
from the offence

P: Yeah, I totally forgot it. So, what should we do?

A: Maybe bring it around next time. We can watch it next time when you come to see me?

Managing the problem/Promise  
of forbearance

P: Yeah, yes, yes. I will definitely bring it next time.

A: Great! That's wonderful.

IFIDs

P: Sorry.

### **4.4.5 Sequence of Apology Strategy Choice**

In this section, the order in which strategies were used by the CESL participants will be considered with the analysis focused on the first three strategies used across all the situations as well as in each situation.

Overall, the CESL participants started their apology mostly with 'IFIDs'. The first three strategies used by most CESL participants were 'IFIDs'. They then switched between the strategies 'managing the problem' and 'IFIDs'.



In situations where the participants were of lower status and the offence was severe (such as RS2 and RS4), they tended to use strategies as 'managing the problem' and 'explanation or account' based on the context of the situations, then 'IFIDs' appeared in the middle of the apology sequence followed by more uses of 'managing the problem'.

In RS10, where the distance was far and offence was severe, the CESLs used IFIDs to start the apology as well as to end the apology. 'Distracting from the offence' was used towards the end of the apology in close relationships, such as in RS8, RS9 and RS11. Apart from that, the CESLs finished their apology with 'managing the problem', which was also used in the middle part of apology sequences in most situations, and therefore seemed to play an important role for most CESLs.

RSs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Order	Most frequently used apology strategy at each order in situations											
1 <sup>st</sup>	IFIDs	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	Explanation or account	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	IFIDs	IFIDs	IFIDs	IFIDs	IFIDs	IFIDs
2 <sup>nd</sup>	IFIDs	IFIDs	IFIDs	Explanation or account	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Explanation or account	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Taking on responsibility	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Explanation or account	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility	Managing the problem	IFIDs	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility
4 <sup>th</sup>	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	IFIDs	IFIDs	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem
5 <sup>th</sup>	IFIDs	IFIDs	IFIDs	Managing the problem	IFIDs	IFIDs		Managing the problem	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Managing the problem
6 <sup>th</sup>	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Promise of forbearance		Managing the problem	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	Distracting from the offence	Managing the problem
7 <sup>th</sup>	Explanation or account	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility		IFIDs		Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	IFIDs	IFIDs	Managing the problem
8 <sup>th</sup>	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem		Managing the problem		Managing the problem			IFIDs	Managing the problem
9 <sup>th</sup>	IFIDs		IFIDs					IFIDs				Managing the problem
10 <sup>th</sup>												Managing the problem

Table 4.35 Preferred strategy orders by the CESL participants across situations



**PAGE**

**NUMBERING**

**AS ORIGINAL**

4.5 British Learners of Mandarin Chinese

4.5.1 Use of strategies and sub-strategies

This section presents the number of times each strategy and sub-strategy was used by BCLS participants. Examples of how strategies were used are also given.

Strategy 1 Illocutionary force indicating devices

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
IFIDs	25	26	13	31	18	12	4	30	9	40	24	24	256
IFID	24	22	12	20	18	11	4	20	9	28	22	21	211
Intensifying	1	2	0	11	0	1	0	10	0	3	0	3	31
Emotional expression	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	7
Double intensifier	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Please	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Double IFID	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Concern for hearer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	7

Table 4.36 Number of times ‘IFIDs’ and sub-strategies used by BCSLs

IFID

As shown in Table 4.36, the most highly used sub-strategy of IFIDs by the BCSL participants was IFID. As mentioned previously, three apology formulae were used by BCSL participants. “不好意思” (*bu hao yi si*, feeling embarrassed) and “对不起” (*dui bu qi*, sorry) were used in almost all RSs. Sub-strategy IFID was used mostly in situations where offence was high such as RS 2, 4, 10, 11 and 12. It was used least in RS 7 where social distance was far and severity of offence was low. It was also used less frequently in RS 9 (forgot DVD) in which social distance was close and severity of offence was low. The following is one example:

Example 128 (BCSL/F, RS5)

A: 你们这儿音乐比较吵, 可不可以把音乐关小一点?  
P: 可以, 对不起!

Translation:

A: Your music is really loud here. Could you please turn it down a bit?  
P: Sure, sorry!



Example 129 (BCSL/F, RS12)

A: 你怎么会搞错的呢?  
P: 我真不知道！对不起，很抱歉！

Translation:

A: How could you get it wrong?  
P: I really had no idea. **Sorry. I apologize!**

In the current data set, BCSL participants used a number of IFID formulae which indicated the most conventionalized and routine apology. In Figure 4.7, a list of IFID formulas in Mandarin Chinese used by BCSL participants is presented.

As shown in Figure 4.7, there were only three IFID formulae used by BCSL participants. “对不起” (*dui bu qi*, sorry) was the main choice by both male and female participants (n=110). Male participants used this formula (n=60) more often than female participants (n=50). On the other hand, the word “不好意思” (*bu hao yi si*, feeling embarrassed) was the second most commonly used formula by BCSL participants. BCSL female participants used this formula (n=36) over three times more often than male participants (n=10). The third most common formula was “抱歉” (*bao qian*, to apologise), n=5. However, this was only used by female participants.

Figure 4.7 shows the frequency of use of these three IFID formulae by male and female participants.

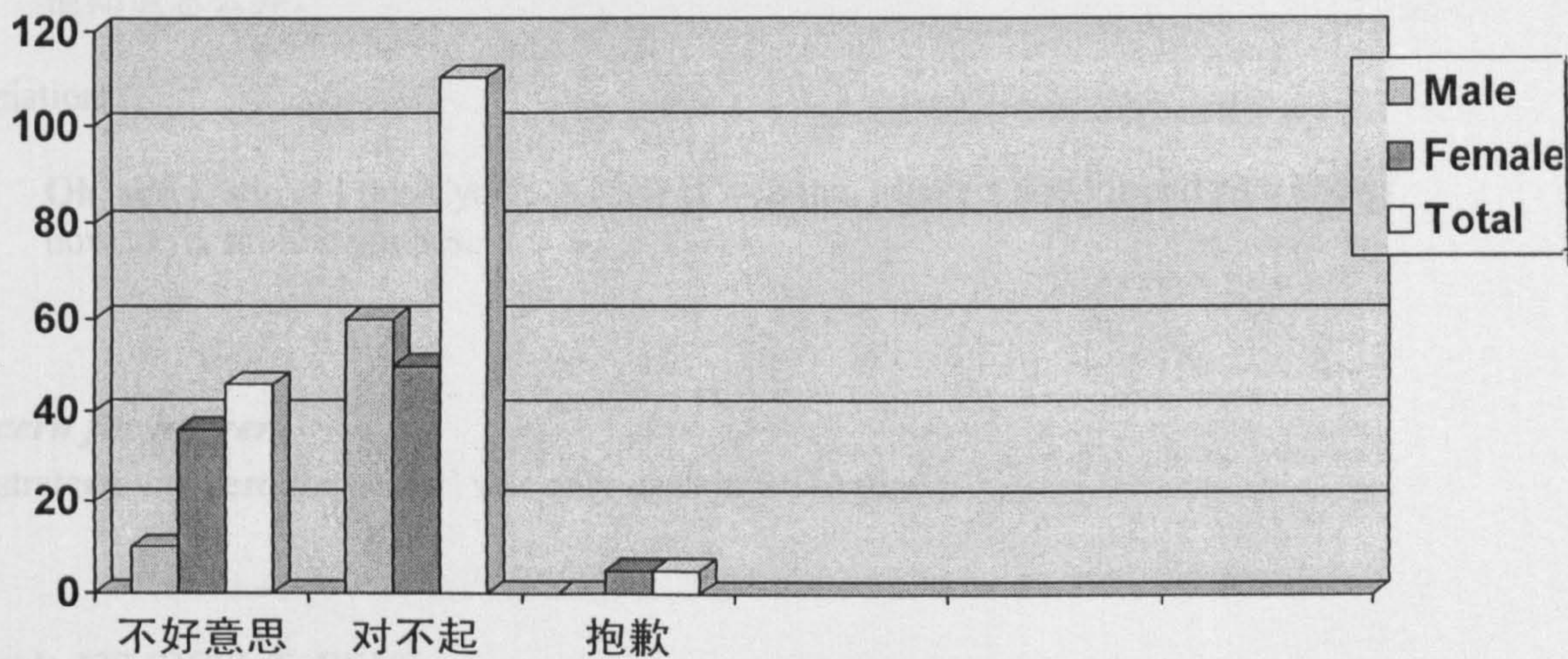


Figure 4.7 IFID formulae in the BCSL data



Intensifiers

Intensifiers were used more frequently in situations in which severity of offence was high such as RS4 (n=11). It was also used in RS8 where the social distance was close. The BCSL participants used the following range of intensifiers: ‘真’ (*zhen*, really), ‘很’ (*hen*, very).

Example 130 (BCSL/F, RS10)

P: 你怎么样?  
A: 好烫, 很烫, 我擦一下。  
P: 我真不好意思!  
Translation:  
P: Are you ok?  
A: It's really hot. I will clean it up.  
P: I am really sorry.

Emotional expression

Emotional expressions were not used very often by BCSL participants. The most common emotional expressions were ‘哦’ (oh), ‘啊’ (oh), ‘哎呀’ (oh, no) and ‘哎哟’ (oh, no). This sub strategy was highly used in RS2 (n=11) and RS10 (n=7).

Example 131 (BCSL/F, RS5)

P: 哎哟, 对不起对不起! 我看, 你给我吧。 我有一个好朋友他是弄这些东西的, 手机他知道怎么弄。  
Translation:  
P: Oh, sorry, sorry! I think you can leave it with me. I have a good friend who knows how to fix mobile phones.

Concern for hearer

Sub-strategy ‘concern for hearer’ was only used in RS10 (n=7).

Example 132 (BCSL/F, RS10)

P: 对不起对不起! 你没事吧?



Translation:

P: Sorry, sorry! Are you ok?

Strategy 2 Taking on responsibility

Table 4.37 shows the sub-strategies of ‘taking on responsibility’ used by BCSL participants.

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
Taking on responsibility	2	24	4	35	5	5	1	14	26	5	5	40	166
Explicit self-blame	0	8	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	32
Implicit self-blame	1	10	1	4	3	2	0	0	13	0	0	4	38
Lack of intent	0	0	3	8	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	13
Expression of embarrassment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	3
Justify hearer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	4	0	2	9
Indication of effort to avoid offence	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Refusal to acknowledge guilt	0	2	0	4	1	0	1	0	9	0	1	0	18
Eliciting empathy	1	2	0	15	0	3	0	9	3	0	1	11	45
Expression of self-deficiency	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	7

Table 4.37 Number of times ‘taking of responsibility’ and sub-strategies used by BCSLs

Explicit self-blame

‘Explicit self-blame’ was mostly used in RS12 (n=20). It was also used relatively frequently in RS2 (n=8). A few BSCL participants (n=3) used this sub-strategy in RS 4. It seems that this sub-strategy was mainly used in situations in which severity of offence was high and social distance was far. Only one participant used this sub-strategy in RS5 when the offence was light.

Example 133 (BCSL/F, RS12)

P: 其实我跟你说错了 其实是明天就要交给老师

Translation:

P: Actually I said it wrong to you. It should be handed in tomorrow.

Example 134 (BCSL/M, RS6)

P: 我知道是我的错,对不起。

Translation:

P: I know it's my fault. Sorry.

### ***Implicit self-blame***

This sub-strategy was mostly used in RS9 (n=13) and in RS2 (n=10). It was the second most frequently used sub-strategy of 'taking on responsibility'.

#### **Example 135 (BCSL/M, RS2)**

P: 对不起, 我忘了。

Translation:

P: Sorry. I forgot.

### ***Lack of intent***

This sub-strategy was mostly used in RS4 (n=8) and RS3 (n=3). It also appeared in RS8 and RS10.

#### **Example 136 (BCSL/M, RS3)**

P: 不好意思, 我不知道你有考试!

Translation:

P: Sorry. I really didn't realize you've got an exam!

### ***Expression of embarrassment***

This sub-strategy was not used often by BCSL participants (n=5). It was only used in RS8 (n=2), RS9 (n=2) and RS10 (n=1), and then only by female NC participants.

#### **Example 137 (BCSL/M, RS8)**

P: 哦, 我不知道该怎么说! 我今天晚上真的没有空, 真的对不起!



Translation:

P: **Oh, I don't know how to tell you this. I really don't have time tonight. I am really sorry.**

### ***Justify hearer***

This sub-strategy was used several times in RS10. The BCSL participants used this strategy to indicate their awareness of the severity of the offence and that the hearer had a right to complain about the offence.

#### **Example 138 (BCSL/F, RS10)**

P: **对不起，阿 不好意思阿， 实在是很烫的阿！**

Translation:

P: **Sorry, sorry! I know it must be really hot.**

### ***Indication of effort to avoid offence***

This sub-strategy was only used in RS4 by one participant.

#### **Example 139 (BCSL/F, RS4)**

P: **我已经提前 1 个多小时出发了，但是堵车了。我没有办法跟你联系 其实我通知了你们这里的前台。**

Translation:

P: **I left home an hour earlier but there was a traffic jam. I couldn't contact you but I've actually informed the receptionist here.**

### ***Refusal to acknowledge guilt***

This sub-strategy was mainly used in RS9 (n=9) and RS4 (n=4).

#### **Example 140 (BCSL/M, RS4)**

P: **我是来面试的 我迟到我乘公共汽车 我的汽车坏了 所以我坐地铁 出来再出租汽车 我迟到了 2 个小时 可是真的不是我的错。**

Translation:

P: I am here for the interview. I am late. I took the bus but it broke down. So I had to take the underground and then taxi. I am late by two hours, **but it's really not my fault.**

### *Eliciting empathy*

This was the mostly frequently used sub-strategy of 'taking on responsibility' (n=45). It was used more often particularly in RS4 (n=15), RS12 (n=11) and RS8 (n=9).

#### Example 141 (BCSL/M, RS4)

A: 韩先生 对 你应该 2 个小时之前 面试是排在 2 个小时之前

P: 对 对 我知道 可是没办法 堵车 所以 真对不起

Translation:

A: Mr. Han, yes, you are supposed to be here two hours ago. The interview was arranged two hours ago.

P: **Right, right. I know.** But there's really nothing I can do. There was a traffic jam. I am really sorry.

### *Expression of self-deficiency*

'Expression of self-deficiency' was only used in three situations (n=7): RS11 (n=3), RS2 (n=2) and RS12 (n=3).

#### Example 142 (BCSL/M, RS12)

A: 你怎么可能搞错吗?

P: 我太笨了!

Translation:

A: How could you get it wrong?

P: **I am too stupid!**

## **Strategy 3 Explanation or account**

Table 4.38 shows numbers of times the sub-strategies of 'explanation or account' were used.

'Stating reason' was mainly used in RS4 (n=32) as well as RS8 (n=31). On the other hand,

'eliciting sympathy' was only used in RS8 (n=7).



Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>Explanation or account</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>115</b>
Stating reason	4	6	6	32	10	7	0	31	3	0	1	8	108
Eliciting sympathy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	7

Table 4.38 Number of times ‘explanation or account’ strategies used by BCSLs

*Stating reason*

Example 143 (BCSL/M, RS4)

P:       对不起, 我在路上有很多车, 很多汽车, 我没有我的手机, 对不起! 麻烦你!

Translation:

P:       Sorry! There was bad traffic on the way here and I didn’t bring my mobile. Sorry for the trouble.

*Eliciting sympathy*

Example 144 (BCSL/M, RS8)

P:       我知道, 可是今天晚上我真得不能去玩. 我们都在办公室里我们都在, 你明白我的意思吗? 我们的公司坏事了, 这个公司现在是我的生活, 要是我没有这个公司要是我没有这个工作, 我没法子, 我真的不知道怎么.

Translation:

P:       I know but I really can’t go out tonight. Everybody in the office is here. Do you know what I mean? There’s an emergency in the company. It means a lot to me and I will lose my job if the company has problem. There’s nothing else I can do and I really don’t know how to explain this to you.

**Strategy 4 Managing the problem:**

Four sub-strategies were identified in the BCSL data as shown in Table 4.39

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>Managing the problem</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>398</b>
Offering repair/solution/suggestion	1	10	14	14	0	22	14	39	14	12	37	54	231
Being co-operative	10	35	14	4	0	18	2	14	9	0	14	23	143
Refusing to repair	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	5
Negotiating	1	1	0	14	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	19

Table 4.39 Number of times ‘managing the problem’ and sub-strategies used by BCSLs

### ***Offering repair/solution/suggestion***

The BCSL participants used these sub-strategies mostly in RS12 (n=54), followed by RS8 (n=39) and RS11 (n=37). The only situation in which the BCSL participants didn't offer repair/solution/suggestion was RS5.

#### **Example 145 (BCSL/M, RS11)**

P: 怎么办怎么办? 我可以买你一个新的, 修这个不难修, 我们去那个修手机店吧!

Translation:

P: What shall we do? What shall we do? **I can buy you a new one.** It's not difficult to fix it either. Let's go to the phone repair shop!

### ***Being co-operative***

The BCSL participants used this strategy most frequently in RS2 (n=35) and then in RS12 (n=23) and thirdly in RS6 (n=18). This was the second most used sub-strategy of 'taking on responsibility'.

#### **Example 146 (BCSL/F, RS2)**

A: 我现在很忙, 你下个星期会有时间吗?

P: 当然可以.

Translation:

A: I am very busy now will you be free next week?

P: **Of course.**

### ***Refuse to repair***

This sub-strategy was only used in RS3 (n=2), 7 (n=2) and RS9 (n=1).

#### **Example 147 (BCSL/M, RS3)**

A: 楼长你好, 是这样, 你看现在已经 12 点多了, 我明天一早有一个考试, 但是你们这儿音乐有点吵了, 可不可以把音乐调的低一点?

P: 对不起, 不可以, 我们都在这儿玩玩, 觉得你的要求太高.

Translation:

A: Hi. It's already past midnight and I have an exam tomorrow early morning. Your music is too loud. Could you please turn it down a bit?



P:       **Sorry, I can't. We are all having fun here and I think you are asking for too much.**

*Negotiating*

‘Negotiating’ was mainly used in RS4 (n=13). This was not a sub-strategy which the NC participants used often.

Example 148 (BCSL/F, RS4)

A:       你知道我们这轮面试已经结束了，我们正在整理材料呢。  
P:       真的？有没有办法做一个短的面试？因为我非常有兴趣做这个工作，就是我今天碰到很多问题啊，不知道能不能帮我一下？

Translation:

A:       As you know, we have already finished this round of interviews. We are packing up the materials.  
P:       **Really? Is there no chance to have a short interview? I am really interested in this job. It's a shame that I ran into many problems today. Could you please re-consider?**

**Strategy 5 Promise of forbearance**

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>Promise of forbearance</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>22</b>

**Table 4.40** Number of times ‘promise of forbearance’ used by BCSLs

The BCSL participants used this strategy relatively frequently in RS2 (n=8) and RS1 (n=6).

Example 149 (BCSL/F, RS2)

P:       还是下午两点？  
A:       对，请你写下来，不要忘了！  
P:       没有问题，不会忘的。

Translation:

P:       Still 2pm?  
A:       Yes. Please write it down and don't forget!  
P:       No problem and I won't forget.

Strategy 6 Distracting from the offence

As shown in table 4.41, there are seven sub-strategies of distracting from the offence. Across all the situations, ‘acting innocently’ was the most frequently used sub-strategy, and ‘humour’ was the least by BCSL participants.

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
Distracting from the offence	3	13	12	8	10	12	7	16	28	0	20	11	140
Acting innocently	0	10	4	0	6	4	6	0	14	0	4	0	48
Task-oriented remark	1	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	3	6	18
Making comment	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	1	0	8	1	15
Invitation to hearer for suggestions	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	5
Switching the topic	2	3	5	3	3	8	0	5	5	0	5	4	43
Appeasing	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	4	0	0	0	8
Humour	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3

Table 4.41 Number of times ‘distracting from the offence’ and sub-strategies used by BCSLs

Acting innocently

This was the third most frequently used sub-strategy by the BCSL participants, employed to distract the hearer from the offence. It was used particularly often in RS9 (n=14) and RS2 (n=10). It was also used often in RS6 (n=10) and RS7 (n=6).

Example 150 (BCSL/F, RS9)

- A: 唉 片子呢?
- P: 片子?
- A: 你说好带好看的 DVD 给我的阿.
- P: 阿, 我有说过吗?

Translation:

- A: Where’s the DVD?
- P: DVD?
- A: You said you would bring a good one.
- P: Oh, did I?

Task-oriented remark

This was the most frequently used sub-strategy by the BCSL participants to divert the hearer’s attention to what should be done next. It was used most often in RS12 (n=6).



Example 151 (BCSL/M, RS11)

P: 我们现在去商店吧。

A: 对，我先回家拿我的那个卡，然后我们去店里问一问，可能他们可以修。

Translation:

P: **Let's go to the shop now.**

A: Alright. I will go home first to get the guarantee card and then we can go to the shop to see if they can repair it.

***Making comment***

The BCSL participants also used sub-strategy 'making comment' to divert hearer's attention away from the offence. It was mainly used in RS11 and 8.

Example 152 (BCSL/M, RS8)

P: 明天晚上好吗？你有没有事？

A: 那明天几点？

P: 明天 8 点半。很好的美国电影。

Translation:

P: How about tomorrow night? Are you free/

A: What time then?

P: Half past 8. **It's a very good American film.**

***Invitation to hearer for suggestions***

This sub-strategy was not used often by the BCSL participants.

***Switching the topic***

This was the second most frequently used sub-strategy of 'distracting from the offence' by the BCSL participants. It was mostly used in RS6 (n=8). It was also used in all other situations apart from RS10.

Example 153 (BCSL/F, RS3)

A: 这儿音乐有点吵，可不可以轻声一点？

P: 当然可以。问题是，我给你介绍一下，这个是我很好的朋友。

A: 你好。

P: 今天是我的生日，我们开一个小的 party 阿！这样吧，你要不喝一点酒？要不要阿？

Translation:

A: Your music is a bit loud. Could you turn it down a bit?  
P: Of course. **The thing is, let me introduce you to my good friend.**  
A: Hello.  
P: Today is my birthday and we are having a small party. **How about you have some wine? Would you like some wine?**

*Appeasing*

This sub-strategy was used predominantly in RS8 and 9. It was not used very often by the BCSL participants.

Example 154 (BCSL/M, RS8)

P: 然后我请你吃饭。

Translation:

P: **I will take you out for a meal.**

*Humour*

BCSL participants only used sub-strategy ‘humour’ in RS8. It was mainly used by male participants.

**Strategy 7 Reassurance**

There was no sub-strategy under ‘reassurance’.

Role Play Situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
Reassurance	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	7	38	57

**Table 4.42** Number of times ‘reassurance’ used by BCSLs

This strategy was used mainly in RS12 (n=22). It was also used relatively frequently in RS11 (n=10), RS9 (n=9) and RS8 (n=8).



Example 155 (BCSL/F, RS8)

- A: 但是我们不是说好看这个新片子的吗?下星期就没了!  
P: 新片子都有啊!每个星期都有新片子!  
A: 你确定吗?  
P: 确定确定。

Translation:

- A: But didn't we say we'd go to watch this new film? It won't be on anymore next week!  
P: **There will always be a new film! There is a new film every week!**  
A: Are you sure?  
P: **Sure, sure.**

Example 156 (BCSL/M, RS12)

- P: 对不起,可是我刚做完,很容易,很容易。

Translation:

- P: Sorry, but I've just done it. It's really easy, really easy.

#### **4.5.2 Distribution of Each Strategy across All Situations**

The most frequent strategy used by BCSL participants was 'managing the problem' (n=398), followed by 'IFIDs' (n=256), 'taking on responsibility' (n=166), 'distracting from the offence' (n=140), 'explanation or account' (n=115), 'reassurance' (n=57), 'promise of forbearance' (n=22) and 'others' (n=10).

In percentage term, 77.6% of the BCSL participants used strategy 'managing the problem', which was the most frequently used strategy by female participants. 74.5% of the BCSL participants chose 'IFIDs', the strategy most frequently chosen by male (78.1%) and the second most frequently by female (70.8%) participants. The third most frequent strategy for both male and female NC participants was 'distracting from the offence' and this was followed by 'taking on responsibility'.

RSs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Apology strategies												
S1. IFIDs	16 (100%)	14 (87.5%)	10 (62.5%)	14 (87.5%)	12 (75%)	10 (62.5%)	4 (25%)	14 (87.5%)	8 (50%)	15 (93.8%)	11 (68.8%)	15 (93.8%)
S2. Taking on responsibility	1 (6.3%)	12 (75%)	4 (25%)	13 (81.3%)	5 (31.3%)	5 (31.3%)	1 (6.3%)	8 (50%)	12 (75%)	5 (31.3%)	4 (25%)	12 (75%)
S3. Explanation or account	3 (18.3%)	6 (37.5%)	6 (37.5%)	16 (100%)	8 (50%)	7 (43.8%)	0	16 (100%)	3 (18.3%)	0	1 (6.3%)	4 (25%)
S4. Managing the problem	10 (62.5%)	13 (81.3%)	16 (100%)	13 (81.3%)	0	15 (93.8%)	13 (81.3%)	16 (100%)	14 (87.5%)	7 (43.8%)	16 (100%)	16 (100%)
S5. Promise of future forbearance	6 (37.5%)	6 (37.5%)	1 (6.3%)	0	0	2 (12.5%)	0	5 (31.3%)	0	0	0	0
S6. Distracting from the offence	3 (18.8%)	10 (62.5%)	10 (62.5%)	3 (18.8%)	7 (43.8%)	6 (37.5%)	6 (37.5%)	11 (68.8%)	13 (81.3%)	0	12 (75%)	6 (37.5%)
S7. Reassurance	1 (6.3%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	8 (50%)	0	0	5 (31.3%)	14 (87.5%)
S8. Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (6.3%)	1 (6.3%)	1 (6.3%)	0	0	2 (12.5%)

Table 4.43 Frequency of strategy use by BCSL (n=16) participants across situations



### ***IFIDs***

All the BCSL participants chose to use S1 in RS1. 93.75% of the participants used IFIDs in RS10 and 12. The situation in which IFIDs were least frequently used by BCSL participants (n=8, 50%) was RS9, in which severity of offence was low and social distance was close. No statistical correlation was found.

### ***Taking on responsibility***

Strategy 'taking on responsibility' was used by 81.25% of the participants in RS4 and 75% in RS2, 9 and RS12. RS2, 4 and 12 were high severity contexts and the social distance was far. This strategy was not used often in RS1 and 7. Statistics showed that 'taking on responsibility' correlated with severity of the offence ( $r=0.285$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

### ***Explanation or Account***

All the participants used 'Explanation or account' in RS4 and RS8. This strategy was not used very often by BCSL participants in other situations. It was not selected in RS 7 and RS10. No correlation was found between this strategy and the contextual factors.

### ***Managing the problem***

'Managing the problem' was used very frequently in most situations. All the participants used this strategy in RS3, 8, 11 and 12. In some situations, such as RS3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11, it was used more frequently than IFIDs by the BCSL participants. It was only not used in RS5. According to correlation test, selection of 'managing the problem' was found to correlate with severity of offence in the situation ( $r=0.169$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

### ***Promise of forbearance***

This strategy was not used often by the BCSL participants. It was mainly used in RS1 (37.5%), RS2 (37.5%) and RS8 (31.25%). No correlation was found between this strategy and the contextual factors.

### *Distracting from the offence*

In the BCSL data, 'distracting from the offence' was not found to correlate with any contextual factors. Participants used this strategy mainly in RS9 (81.3%), RS11 (75%) and RS8 (68.75%). In severe situations, such as RS4 and 6, this strategy was not used often by the BCSL participants. It was not used in RS10 by any participant.

### *Reassurance*

This strategy was mainly used by BCSL participants in RS12 (87.5%). Half of the participants used this strategy in RS8 and 31.25% employed it in RS11. It was not used by the BCSL participants otherwise. No statistical correlation was found between participants' choice of this strategy and the three contextual factors.

## **4.5.3 Gender Differences in Strategy Use**

Male BCSL participants used a slightly greater number of 'IFIDs', 'taking on responsibility', 'explanation or account' and 'promise of forbearance' than female participants respectively. 'Managing the problem' was used almost an equal number of times by the male (n=198, 49.7%) and female (n=200, 50.3%) participants. Almost 70% of the use of the strategy 'reassurance' was by female participants, with only 33.33% by males. In addition, female participants used 'distracting from the offence' (n=77, 55%) relatively more than males (n=63, 45%).

The most frequently used strategy was 'managing the problem' (n=398). The most frequently used sub-strategy was 'offering repair' (n=231, 58.0%) and then 'being co-operative' (n=143, 35.9%). 'Negotiating' and 'Refusing to repair' were only used a few times by the group. Female BCSL participants used 'offering repair' and 'being co-operative' slightly more than males, whereas male BCSL participants used 'negotiating' and 'refusing to repair' more times than females.



Participants	M (n=8)	F (n=8)	Total (n=16)
Strategy Type	Number of times apology strategies used		
<b>1. IFIDs</b>	<b>140 (54.7%)</b>	<b>116 (45.3%)</b>	<b>256 (100%)</b>
• IFID	111 (43.3%)	100 (39.1%)	211 (82.4%)
• Intensifying	21 (8.2%)	10 (3.9%)	31 (12.1%)
• Emotional expressions	4 (1.5%)	3 (1.2%)	7 (2.7%)
• Double intensifier	0	0	0
• Please	0	0	0
• Double IFID	0	0	0
• Concern for hearer	4 (1.5%)	3 (1.2%)	7 (2.7%)
<b>2. Taking on responsibility</b>	<b>91 (54.8%)</b>	<b>75 (45.2%)</b>	<b>166 (100%)</b>
• Explicit self-blame	12 (7.2%)	20 (12.0%)	32 (19.2%)
• Implicit self-blame	19 (11.4%)	19 (11.4%)	38 (22.8%)
• Lack of intent	2 (1.2%)	11 (6.6%)	13 (7.8%)
• Expression of embarrassment	3 (1.8%)	0	3 (1.8%)
• Justify hearer	2 (1.2%)	7 (4.2%)	9 (5.4%)
• Indication of effort to avoid offence	0	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.6%)
• Refusal to acknowledge guilt	16 (9.6%)	2 (1.2%)	18 (10.8%)
• Agreeing/creating common ground	32 (19.3%)	13 (7.8%)	45 (27.1%)
• Expression of self-deficiency	5 (3.0%)	2 (1.2%)	7 (4.2%)
<b>3. Explanation or account</b>	<b>65 (56.5%)</b>	<b>50 (43.5%)</b>	<b>115 (100%)</b>
• Stating reason	60 (52.2%)	48 (41.7%)	108 (93.9%)
• Eliciting sympathy	5 (4.3%)	2 (1.8%)	7 (6.1%)
<b>4. Managing the problem</b>	<b>198 (49.7%)</b>	<b>200 (50.3%)</b>	<b>398 (100%)</b>
• Offering repair/ solution/suggestion	111 (27.9%)	120 (30.1%)	231 (58.0%)
• Being co-operative	70 (17.6%)	73 (18.3%)	143 (35.9%)
• Refusing to repair	3 (0.7%)	2 (0.5%)	5 (1.2%)
• Negotiating	14 (3.5%)	5 (1.2%)	19 (4.7%)
<b>5. Promise of forbearance</b>	<b>13 (59.1%)</b>	<b>9 (40.9%)</b>	<b>22 (100%)</b>
<b>6. Distracting from the offence</b>	<b>63 (45%)</b>	<b>77 (55%)</b>	<b>140 (100%)</b>
• Acting innocently	16 (11.4%)	32 (22.8%)	48 (34.2%)
• Task-oriented remark	9 (6.4%)	9 (6.4%)	18 (12.8%)
• Making comment	3 (2.1%)	12 (8.6%)	15 (10.7%)
• Invitation for hear for suggestions	3 (2.1%)	2 (1.4%)	5 (3.5%)
• Switching the topic	25 (17.8%)	18 (12.8%)	43 (30.6%)
• Appeasing	4 (2.8%)	4 (2.8%)	8 (5.6%)
• Humour	3 (2.1%)	0	3 (2.1%)
<b>7. Reassurance</b>	<b>19 (33.33%)</b>	<b>38 (66.67%)</b>	<b>57 (100%)</b>
<b>8. Others</b>	<b>4 (40%)</b>	<b>6 (60%)</b>	<b>10 (100%)</b>

**Table 4.44 BCSL gender differences in choice of apology strategy**

Within the sub-strategies of 'IFIDs', the most frequently used was 'IFID' (82.4%), followed by 'intensifying' (12.1%), 'emotional expression' (2.7%) and 'concern for hearer' (2.7%). No

other sub-strategy was used by BCSL participants. Male participants used more sub-strategies than female participants, especially in terms of the number of times 'intensifying' was used.

'Taking on responsibility' was the third strategy in terms of number of times used by BCSL participants. Four main sub-strategies used by BCSL were in the following order: 'eliciting empathy' (n=45, 27.1%), 'implicit self-blame' (n=38, 32.722.8%), 'explicit self-blame' (n=32, 19.2%), and 'refusal to acknowledge guilt' (n=18, 10.8%). It seems that female participants used 'explicit self-blame' (n=20) and 'lack of intent' (n=11) a greater number of times than the male participants (n=12), (n=2). The male participants used more 'eliciting empathy' (n=40) and 'refusal to acknowledge guilt' (n=16) more than the female participants (n=13), (n=2). Only male participants used 'expression of embarrassment' (n=3).

BCSL participants used the strategy 'distracting from the offence' 140 times altogether. Among the sub-strategies, 'acting innocently' was used most often (n=48), with 'switching the topic' (n=43) and 'task-oriented remark' (n=18) second and third most often respectively. Male participants used 'switching the topic' more times than female participants. Only male participants used 'humour'. Female participants used 'acting innocently' and 'making comments' more times than male participants.

In terms of sub-strategies of 'explanation or account', mostly the BSCL participants used 'stating reason' (n=108, 93.9%) and with only a small incidence of 'elicit empathy' (n=7, 6.1%). Male participants used these two strategies more often than females.



#### 4.5.4 Patterns of Using Explicit and Implicit Apology Strategies

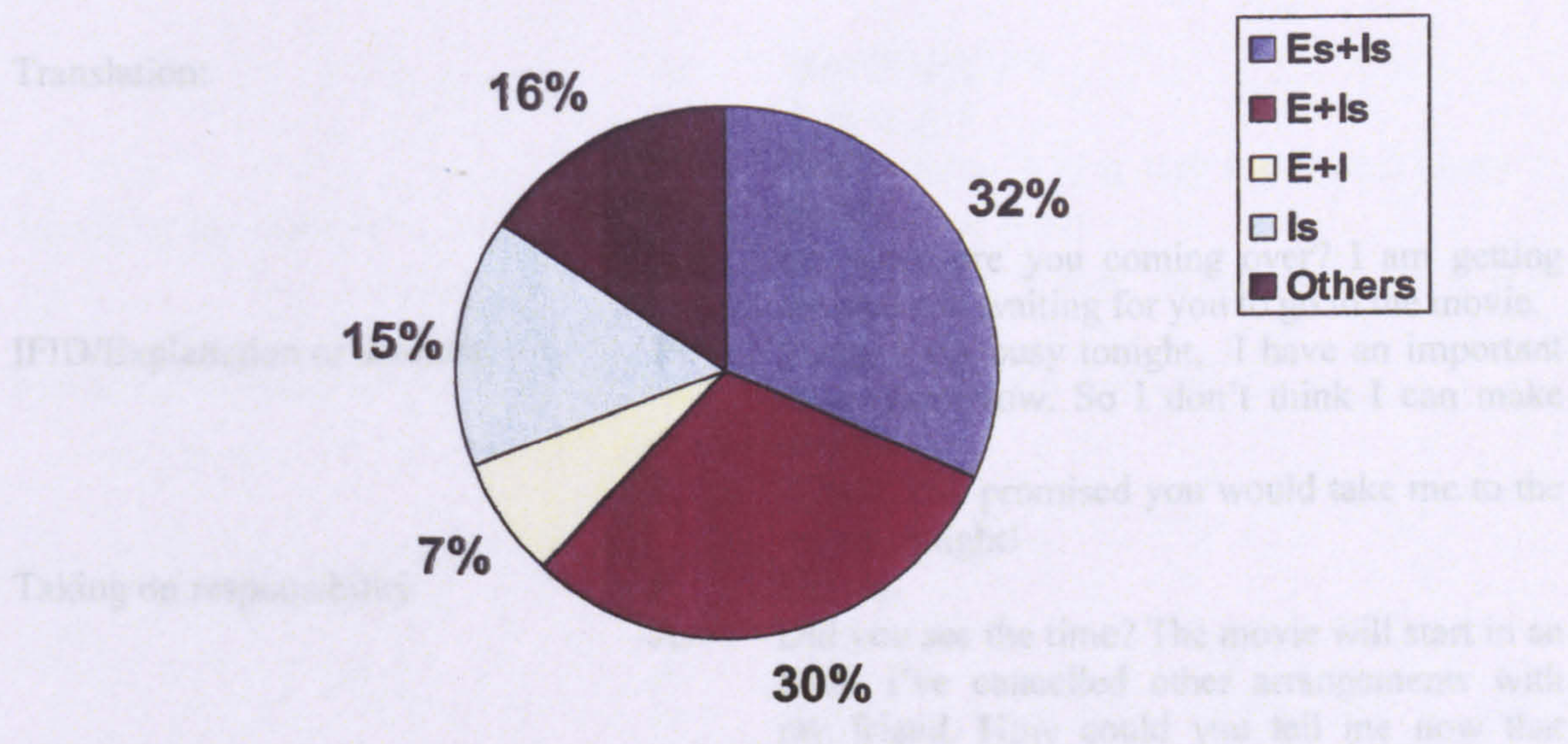
There were altogether eight patterns in the way BCSL participants used explicit and implicit apology strategies: 1. more than one explicit strategy with more than one implicit strategy (Es+Is); 2. more than one explicit strategy with one implicit strategy (Es+I); 3. one explicit strategy and more than one implicit strategy (E+Is); 4. one explicit strategy + one explicit strategy (E+I); 5. more than one explicit strategy (Es); 6. one explicit strategy (E); 7. more than one implicit strategy (Is) and 8. one implicit strategy (I). The frequency of these patterns used in the twelve situations is listed in table 4.45.

RSs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	T
<b>Patterns of strategies</b>													
1. Es + Is	5	8	2	11	2	3	0	8	1	7	5	9	61
2. Es + I	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
3. E+ Is	5	6	8	5	0	5	0	6	7	2	8	6	58
4. E+I	3	0	0	0	7	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	14
5. Es	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	1	0	9
6. E	1	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	6
7. Is	0	2	3	0	1	7	3	2	8	0	2	1	29
8. I	0	0	3	0	1	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	12
Total	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	192

**Table 4.45 Patterns of strategies used by BCSL participants**

The most common pattern used by BCSL participants was 'Es + Is' (n=61, 31.8%). It was used particularly in a situation where severity of the offence was high, for example in RS 2 (n=8), RS4 (n=11), RS10 (n=7) and RS12 (n=9). The next most common pattern was 'E + Is' (30.2%), using one explicit strategy with more than one implicit strategy. This pattern was used in almost all situations except RS5 and 7. 50% of the BCSL participants used pattern 'E + Is' in RS3 (n=8) and 11 (n=8). The third popular pattern in the BCSL data was 'Is' (15.1%), in other words, only using implicit strategies. That was especially the case in RS6 (n=7) and RS9 (n=8). Pattern 'E + I' was mostly used in RS5 and pattern 'I' was mainly used in RS7.





**Figure 4.8 Common apology patterns used by the BCSLs**

Examples 158 – 160 show the first three common patterns used by BCSL participants.

#### Es + Is

##### Example 158 (BCSL/M, RS8)

	A: 喂?
	P: 喂?
	A: 表哥 你什么时候来 我已经穿好衣服等 你带我去看电影了
IFID/Explanation or account	P: 对不起, 今天晚上有事, 明天有一个大考试, 所以今天...
	A: 什么呀, 你说好今天带我去看电影的!
Taking on responsibility	P: 我知道
	A: 你看看现在都几点了 还差一小时电影就开始了 我把好朋友的约会都推掉了 就等你 你现在 才告诉我你有什么考试
IFID/Explanation/ Managing the problem	P: 对不起, 有事, 明天晚上我去接你好吗?
	A: 哎呀 我就想今天去的 你都已经说好了 你又 要改变主意
Managing the problem	P: 我明天晚上好吗? 你有没有事?
	A: 那明天几点
Distracting from the offence	P: 明天 8 点半 很好的美国电影
	A: 国家宝藏?
Managing the problem	P: 国家宝藏 恩 对
	A: 好吧 那好吧 那你 祝你考试考得好一点 那你 明天来接我 要请我吃冰淇淋
IFID/Managing the problem	P: 好 对不起 我明天下午给你打电话
	A: 那好 那我等你电话 好
	P: 谢谢 再见



Translation:

	A: Hell?
	P: Hello?
	A: Hi, when are you coming over? I am getting dressed and waiting for you to go to the movie.
IFID/Explanation or account	P: Sorry, I am busy tonight. I have an important exam tomorrow. So I don't think I can make tonight.
	A: What? You promised you would take me to the movie tonight!
Taking on responsibility	P: I know.
	A: Did you see the time? The movie will start in an hour. I've cancelled other arrangements with my friend. How could you tell me now that you've got exams?
IFID/Explanation/ Managing the problem	P: Sorry I am busy. How about tomorrow night?
	A: Oh, no! I wanted to go today. You've promised and now you are changing your mind.
Managing the problem	P: How about tomorrow night? Are you free?
	A: Well, what time?
Distracting from the offence	P: Half 8. There's a very good American film.
	A: 'National treasure'?
Managing the problem	P: Yes, that's right.
	A: Well, ok then. Wish you good luck in your exam. You have to buy me ice-cream when you come tomorrow.
IFID/Managing the problem	P: Fine. Sorry. I will call you tomorrow afternoon.
	A: Ok, I will wait for your call then.
	P: Cheers, bye.

E + Is

Example 159 (BCSL/M, RS12)

	A: 喂
	P: 喂 这是**
	A: 你好 学长 有什么事吗?
	P: 我告诉你你需要给你的老师你的写作
	A: 对对
Taking on responsibility	P: 我说2个星期以后 可是是明天2点
	A: 阿? 没搞错把! 怎么会? 那我怎么办? 我一个字都没写 我想有2个星期的时间 我真的是什么都没有准备怎么办 你怎么会搞错的吗
IFID/Reassurance	P: 对不起 可是我刚做完 很容易 很容易
	A: 你学了那么久了当然容易咯 我还是新生阿 我什么都还不会 一个晚上肯定来不及
Managing the problem	
Taking on Responsibility	P: 我明天上课的时候告诉你的老师, 我告诉他是我搞错
	A: 他会同意吗?
Managing the problem	P: 我现在去上网 我给他写简信 告诉他有问题

Managing the problem

A: 那你都写完了?  
P: 我都写完了  
A: 那你有书吗? 有没有书或者是资料可以看?  
P: 哦 你可以看我的!  
A: 对 因为你要帮帮我 我真的是什么都没有准备

Managing the problem

P: 我现在去你的房子告诉你  
A: 好吧

Translation:

Taking on responsibility

A: Hello.  
P: Hello. This is \*\*  
A: Hi, what's new?  
P: I've mentioned to you about the essay.  
A: Right.  
P: I said the deadline was in two weeks' time but it's actually tomorrow

IFID/Reassurance

A: What? Are you kidding? How come? What should I do then? I haven't started at all. I thought I've got two weeks. I really haven't started anything. How could you get it wrong?  
P: Sorry. But I just finished it and it's really really easy.  
A: Well, it should be easy for you as you've been studying for such a long time. But I am new and I don't really know much. I definitely won't make it in one night.

Managing the problem  
Taking on Responsibility

P: I will tell the teacher tomorrow. I will tell him it's my fault.

Managing the problem

A: Will he believe you?  
P: I will email him right now to tell him this problem.  
A: So you've done yours?  
P: Yes, I have.  
A: Then do you have any books? Any books or any references?

Managing the problem

P: Oh, sure, you can look at mine.  
A: You really need to help me as I haven't done anything.

Managing the problem

P: I will come to your place right now to go through some materials.  
A: Ok.

Is

Example 160 (BCSL/F, RS9)

A: 哎 你来了阿 快进来



	P: 你好
	A: 坐坐坐, 你想喝什么?
	P: 可乐好了.
	A: 好, 给你. 哎 dvd 有没有带?
Distracting from the offence	P: 什么 dvd?
	A: 哎 你忘记拉 你说带 dvd 新的片子 你说我们晚上一起看
Taking on responsibility	P: 阿, 我忘啦, 怎么办?
	A: 知道你没记性.
Distracting from the offence	P: 那个 dvd 在我床上
	A: 没关系
Managing the problem	P: 现在 6 点多我可以快点回家拿 然后过来
	A: 没关系拉 我们也可以做其他的 你喜不喜欢逛街? 我们下次看 下次别忘了!
Managing the problem	B: 好啊好啊

#### Translation:

	A: Hey, come on in.
	P: Hi.
	A: Sit down please. What would you like to drink?
	P: Coke please.
	A: Ok. Here you go. Oh, have you brought the DVD?
Distracting from the offence	P: What DVD?
	A: Did you forget? You said you would bring a new movie and we would watch tonight.
Taking on responsibility	P: Oh, I forgot. What do we do now?
	A: I knew you would forget.
Distracting from the offence	P: I left it on my bed.
	A: Never mind.
Managing the problem	P: Now it's gone six and I can go home to fetch it.
	A: It's ok. We can do something else. Do you want to do shopping? We can watch that next time. Don't forget it next time!
Managing the problem	B: Sure, sure.

#### 4.5.5 Sequence of Apology Strategy Choice

In this section, the order of strategies used by the BCSL participants will be presented with a focus on the first three strategies across all the situations and within each situation.

Most BCSL participants started their apology with IFIDs. However, 'managing the problem' was highly selected by BCSL participants throughout the whole sequence of their apology choices. The participants used 'distracting from the offence' to start an apology in a few situations with mostly minor offences (such as in RS2, RS3, RS6, RS9 and RS11).

In situations where the offence was severe (such as RS12, RS2 and RS4), the BCSL participants used 'taking on responsibility' to start their apology or combined this strategy with IFIDs in the first half of the apology. The main body and conclusion of the apologies produced by BCSL participants was mainly used 'managing the problem'.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

In this Chapter, the findings from the open role-plays for each group have been presented. Differences are found across groups in terms of both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the data. A summary of the main findings was presented in Table 4.47. The native British participants tend to opt for explicit apology strategies, whereas the native Chinese participants seem to prefer implicit apology strategies, especially in in-group relationships. The native British participants' choice of explicit apology strategies was found to be very much influenced by the severity of the offence, whereas the native Chinese participants' choice of implicit apology strategies is more associated with power differences and closeness between the speakers. In addition, the native Chinese participants use a range of other strategies which had not been previously coded in the CCSARP coding manual. These strategies serve the function of performing 'face-work' in a Chinese interpersonal relationship. They also reflect features of a collectivist culture. The language learner groups produce fewer apology strategies, this was especially in terms of the use of IFIDs. Both positive and negative transfers can be identified in their choices of strategies. The next chapter focuses on the findings from evaluative questionnaires.



RSs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Order	Most frequently used apology strategy at each order in situations											
1 <sup>st</sup>	IFIDs	Distracting from the offence	Managing the problem	IFIDs	IFIDs	Distracting from the offence	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Distracting from the offence	IFIDs	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility
2 <sup>nd</sup>	IFIDs	IFIDs	Distracting from the offence	Explanation or account	Explanation or account	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	Distracting from the offence	Taking on responsibility
3 <sup>rd</sup>	IFIDs	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Explanation or account	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility
4 <sup>th</sup>	Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility	IFIDs	Taking on responsibility	Distracting from the offence	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Explanation or account	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem
5 <sup>th</sup>	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	IFIDs	IFIDs	Managing the problem		Managing the problem	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Promise of forbearance
6 <sup>th</sup>	Promise of forbearance	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Managing the problem		Managing the problem	Managing the problem	IFIDs	Managing the problem	Managing the problem
7 <sup>th</sup>		Managing the problem		Taking on responsibility		IFIDs		Managing the problem	Taking on responsibility	Managing the problem	Managing the problem	Managing the problem
8 <sup>th</sup>		Managing the problem		Managing the problem		Managing the problem		Explanation or account	Taking on responsibility		Managing the problem	Managing the problem
9 <sup>th</sup>		Managing the problem		Managing the problem		Managing the problem		Managing the problem	Managing the problem		Managing the problem	Managing the problem
10 <sup>th</sup>		Managing the problem		Managing the problem		Managing the problem		Managing the problem	Distracting from the offence		Managing the problem	Managing the problem

**Table 4.46 Preferred strategy orders by the BCSLs**

	NB	NC	CESL	BCSL
<b>Use of Strategy</b>				
S1. IFIDs	534 (29.9%)	379 (23.8%)	388 (40%)	256 (23.1%)
S2. Take on responsibility	329 (18.4%)	293 (18.5%)	136 (14%)	166 (15%)
S3. Explanation or account	152 (8.5%)	146 (9.2%)	95 (9.8%)	115 (10.4%)
S4. Managing the problem	395 (22.1%)	356 (22.4%)	250 (25.7%)	398 (35.9%)
S5. Promise of forbearance	32 (1.8%)	42 (2.6%)	11 (1.1%)	22 (2%)
S6. Distracting from the offence	268 (15%)	226 (14.2%)	80 (8.2%)	140 (12.6%)
S7. Reassurance	75 (4.2%)	61 (3.85)	9 (0.9%)	57 (5%)
S. Others	0	84 (5.3%)	2 (0.2%)	10 (0.9%)
<b>Totoal</b>	1785	1587	971	1109
<b>Use of IFID formulae</b>	sorry, 170 afraid, 6 excuse me, 6 apologise, 5	不好意思, 102 对不起, 39 抱歉, 10 打绕了, 3 原谅, 2 向你道歉, 1 过意不去, 1	sorry, 161 afraid, 2 excuse me, 2 apologise, 2	对不起, 110 不好意思, 46 抱歉, 5
<b>Correlations between strategy and contextual variables</b>				
Severity of offence	S1, S2, S5	S2	S1, S4	S2, S4
Power	S2	S1	S3, S7	
Distance	S2, S5, S6	S3	S1, S2, S3	
<b>Patterns of explicit and implicit strategies</b>				
1. Es + Is	126	70	95	61
2. Es + I	5	14	1	3
3. E + Is	24	53	34	58
4. E + I	11	1	22	14
5. Es	6	3	6	9
6. E	8	3	5	6
7. Is	8	46	25	29
8. I	4	2	4	12
<b>Sequence of apology strategy choice</b>				
Beginning strategies (1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> strategies)	S1, S1, S1	S1, S1, S4	S1, S1, S1	S1, S1/S4, S1
Middle strategies (4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , and 7 <sup>th</sup> )	S4, S4, S6, S1	S4, S4,S4, S4	S4, S1, S4, S1	S4, S4, S4, S4
Ending stratgies (8 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> , and 10 <sup>th</sup> )	S1, S1, S1	S4, S2, S4	S4, S1, S4	S4, S4, S\$

**Table 4.47 A summary of the main findings of apology strategy**